





A JOLLY GOOD SUMMER.

THE JOLLY GOOD SERIES.

BY MARY P. WELLS SMITH.

JOLLY GOOD TIMES ; or, Child-Life on a Farm.

JOLLY GOOD TIMES AT SCHOOL.

THE BROWNS ; or, Jolly Good Times in the City.

THEIR CANOE TRIP.

JOLLY GOOD TIMES AT HACKMATAACK.

MORE GOOD TIMES AT HACKMATAACK.

JOLLY GOOD TIMES TO-DAY,

A JOLLY GOOD SUMMER.

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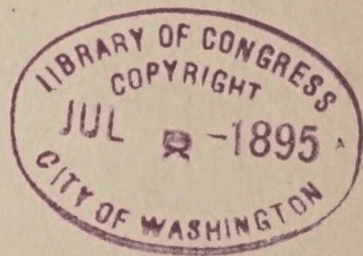
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MARY P. WELLS SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "JOLLY GOOD TIMES; OR, CHILD-LIFE ON A FARM,"
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BROWNS," "THEIR CANOE TRIP."



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TO
AGNES MARY,
WITH UNDYING LOVE.

"A BUD falling from a tree withers ; but that human blossom, whether it dropped from your branches yesterday or a score of years ago, to your thought can suffer no blight. Is it not fresh as the morning to you still ? What was it but an incarnate promise of God, like the morning-star unquenched, though it disappear ?"—DR. C. A. BARTOL.

P R E F A C E.

THIS book, although a story by itself, in reality continues "Jolly Good Times To-day," and tells what Amy Strong and her little friends "did next." It is a story of real American children to-day, neither better nor worse than the small folk who gladden hundreds of homes all over our country,—that land of happy homes.

A hopeful omen for the world's future, of which pessimists might well make note, is that the growing spirit of humanitarianism, perhaps the most striking characteristic of our age, is especially active among the children. They are full of an irrepressible enthusiasm of helpfulness, never happier than when working for some worthy cause, or extending something of their own good fortune to the less favored. The promptings of their generous instincts we may well encourage, and even follow. "Bless the children," says Dr. Bartol. "But for their benediction and solid bounty, the world were not worth living in." "Hear, and hear *to* the chil-

dren," he adds. "These minute philosophers illustrate the conceptions and purposes of God in whatever the human soul may cherish that is good in affection or sublime in hope. . . . Childhood is the everlasting type and the real gospel, always preached under the cheerful sun."

MARY P. WELLS SMITH.

AVONDALE, CINCINNATI, O.,
April 28, 1895.

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A JOLLY GOOD SUMMER.

CHAPTER I.

“FARMING.”

ALL up and down Hillside Avenue there was an intermittent popping of fire-crackers; an irregular, scattering pop, pop, with now and then a tremendous bang where some spendthrift boy lavishly let off a whole pack at once, to the mingled envy and admiration of all the other boys on the avenue. Was it the Fourth of July? By no means. It was only the first of June, but the simmering patriotism of young America could no longer be suppressed, and from then until the fifth of July, the firing would only be limited by the boys' chances of securing money.

Even the girls caught the fever of patriotism raging among the boys. One pleasant Friday afternoon in June, Amy Strong had been up to Mrs. Blau's little store to make a five cent purchase of doll's furniture for the village in the attic, where the court of dukes, counts, and princesses inhabiting the bandbox houses of that aristocratic settlement was constantly growing under the fostering care of Irene and herself. On her way back, she met Kitty Clover coming rather soberly home from school, dragging her school-bag by the strings, as if it were an intolerable burden.

The public school had let out almost an hour before, as Amy knew, or she would not have ventured up to Mrs. Blau's, being shy of meeting the swarm of children who filled the streets at the close of school, wild with the joy of freedom, and ready for any mischievous prank.

"What's the matter, Kitty? What makes you so late?" asked Amy, as Kitty's long face lighted up at sight of her, and she skipped joyfully across the street to join her friend.

"The same old thing," said Kitty. "My problems. Miss Wilson is so strict, and she gives us such long lessons, I can't possibly get them, even if I study every minute. And I did whisper a little to May Morgan, and of course she caught me. I detest problems, anyway."

"So do I," said Amy, heartily. "It's too bad you had to stay in, such a beautiful night as this."

"One good thing," said Kitty. "There are only two weeks more after this. Only six more days of study, think of that, and then those horrible examinations, and then school is out till next fall."

"My school closed to-day," said Amy, "and so did Irene's. And they don't begin again until the first of October. Isn't it lovely?"

"Yes, indeed," said Kitty, "I only wish I went to a private school too. But what is that, Amy?"

"A cap monkey," said Amy, displaying a small iron monkey, to a ring in whose head a long string was tied. "It's very nice. You see his mouth opens just wide enough to hold a cap like this."

Here Amy fed the monkey's yawning mouth from a round box of percussion caps.

"Now you drop him hard on the pavement," said Amy, suiting the action to the word.

Kitty was delighted with the loud bang that followed. "I bought him at Mrs. Blau's," said Amy. "The monkey cost three cents, and you can get a box of caps for a cent."

"I am going to run right home," said Kitty, whose school-bag seemed wonderfully lightened, "and get five cents, and buy me a monkey and some caps."

And when they met Irene and Laura, they too felt cap monkeys necessary to their happiness. Mrs. Blau soon drove a brisk trade, as she always did, if once a fashion were well started among the children of Hillside Avenue. Even the boys did not disdain the cap monkeys, for, as Rob Clover said, —

"Five cents worth of caps lasts three times as long as a pack of crackers, and makes almost as much noise."

When the girls, that night after dinner, were out on the pavement snapping their cap monkeys, Amy told her friends a little piece of good news.

"Oh, girls!" she said, "if it's a pleasant day to-morrow, Mr. Green is going to begin mowing our tall grass, I guess."

"Oh, is he?" cried the girls in concert. "Then we'll all come over here to play in the hay in the afternoon."

"Yes. Mamma told him this morning that she thought the grass was getting over-ripe, and he said he guessed he could come to-morrow, if it was fair. He said he had a stove to clean for Mrs. Kaiser, and a bundle to carry in town for Mrs. Bruce, and Mr. Parker wanted him to take his horse out to

exercise; but he reckoned he could cut some of it, anyway."

While the front part of Professor Strong's grounds, around the house and flower-beds, was kept closely shaven with the lawn-mower, the grass on the sloping hillside in the rear was allowed to grow unmolested, and now tossed its plummy blossoms in the summer wind, unconscious that Mr. Green's scythe was lying in wait, ready to lay its glory low. The mowing of the Strong's tall grass was quite an event among the children of the avenue, being regarded by them as a real bit of farm life, and Mr. Green was always sure to have all the help even his good nature could tolerate.

Saturday morning was as pleasant as the most ardent mower could desire. The rose season had come, and the many rose bushes in Mrs. Strong's beds were a mass of rich color, gladdening the eye, while their sweet fragrance filled the air. The elm shadows lay long from the east on the hillside, where the doomed grass waved and rippled in a gentle breeze; and from the leafy heart of elm and maple, robin, blue-bird, wren, and bobolink poured glad songs.

This was the first sound Amy heard, when she sleepily opened her eyes, and pleasant dream-land began to fade away into the actual to-day. The next was the sound of whetting a scythe.

"It must be a pleasant day," she thought, as she sprang out of bed and ran into her mother's room to peep out at the hillside. Yes, there was Mr. Green, valiantly swinging his scythe, and there were Schneider and Count, and Dr. Trimble's Badger helping him.

Let no one imagine, because Mr. Green began thus promptly, that the mowing would be finished that day. Far from it. Mr. Green's method of farming was more leisurely. He would mow until the Strong's breakfast was over. Then Bridget would call him in to get a cup of coffee and a "bite" to eat. The bite disposed of, he would fill Bridget's coal-buckets, and then "mow a bout or two" more; then hang his scythe up on a maple limb, in plain view of the library window, to cheer Mrs. Strong's spirits every time she looked out to see how the mowing was progressing, with the assurance that Mr. Green was coming right back. By and by, Mr. Green would drop in and mow a few more swaths, in the intervals of errands and chores for half the avenue. In the afternoon, when the heat of the sun was somewhat abated, he would take a few more leisurely swings of the scythe; and so, in this way, if no storm happened to intervene, the Strong's grass was sure to be cut within three or four days, at least.

The children thought Mr. Green's method of farming admirable. The more haying was prolonged, the better were they suited. Soon after breakfast, the little folk of the avenue began to flock into the Strong's back premises, and Mr. Green soon had his hands full.

"Here, Ronald, Victor, Jack, what are you doin' on there?" he called, as he unbent to whet his scythe, and found the boys industriously working, carrying armfuls of freshly cut grass upon the shaven front lawn.

"We're helping you, Mr. Green," said Ronald. "We're piling it up in nice hay-cocks for you."

"Bring that grass right back here," said Mr. Green, "and don't be littering up the lawn that way. I reckon I shall have to rake that lawn clean over now."

"We'll rake it up for you," said Victor. "Where's the rake, Amy?"

Amy was out at the side door, giving Mr. Green's Schneider a nice plateful of breakfast, as she often did, for she and Schneider were great friends. Schneider was a funny little mop of a Scotch terrier, so homely as to be almost handsome, and very intelligent and affectionate. He knew as well as anybody who his friends were, and always wagged his stump of a tail so vigorously when he saw Amy, that he wagged all over. When Mr. Green went off to the city, and forbade Schneider's following, he usually found comfort in lying under the bushes on Amy's premises until his master's return.

"It's down in the stable," said Amy. "I'll get it for you as soon as I feed Schneider."

"Schneider's such an ugly dog," said Victor. "I don't see what you want to feed him for. He isn't half as handsome as Count, or Duke either."

"But he's so nice, aren't you, Schneider? Good little Schneider," said Amy, patting Schneider's sides, now swollen with breakfast.

Schneider wagged his tail rapturously at these pleasing remarks, and then waddled over to snooze contentedly in the cool shade of the maples, but with one eye open, to watch every motion of Mr. Green.

Meantime, Mr. Green discovered Dixon and Jack careering about in the tall, unmown grass.

"Come right out of that ere grass," he called. "What are ye in there for, tramping it down so I can't cut it?"

"This is an Indian jungle," explained Dixon, who had invented this fine game. "Jack's an elephant, and I am a ferocious tiger, and I'm going to spring out on him and devour him. Woo-o-o!" roared Dixon, springing on Jack. Over and over rolled the boys, matting down the grass. Jack was not inclined to be meekly devoured, but pounded Dixon until the tiger roared in earnest.

"Now you stop that, Jack Neale," said Dixon. "You hurt me."

"It's my trunk I'm pounding you with," said Jack. "Elephants always pound with their trunks."

"You play too hard. I don't want to play this way," said Dixon, beginning to cry, and starting for home to tell his mother, none too soon, for Mr. Green was coming down the hill with huge strides, fire in his eye. For so clumsy an animal, the elephant slipped over the back fence into the Goldschmidt's yard with remarkable agility.

"Now all you boys clar right out," said Mr. Green, with emphasis. "Mrs. Strong's in a hurry about this mowing, and I can't be bothered with you boys round under foot any more."

"We'll help you, Mr. Green," said Ronald. "Can't we just rake up that grass for you?"

"No, clar out, all o' ye. I can't stand so much help. When the grass is all cut, you can play in it, if Mrs. Strong is willing."

"I'll let you know, Ronald," said Amy, "when it's all cut, and then we'll have lots of fun."

The boys reluctantly went away, peace reigned on the hillside, and Amy went into the house to get her practising out of the way before afternoon.

By and by, Mrs. Strong, who was at work up stairs, thought she heard the notes of a violin. Looking out her window, she saw an old man, a wandering minstrel, who had come up on the side steps, and was playing. Presently Amy ran upstairs into her mother's room, her blue eyes all aglow with pity and eagerness.

"I was sitting by papa's desk drawing," she said, "and a poor old man came up the side steps, and began playing to me. Please give me some money for him, mamma. He plays beautifully, and he is so old, and looks so poor."

"I've nothing less than a two dollar bill, Amy," said her mother, examining her purse. "I remember now, I paid my last change to the vegetable man this morning."

"Then I will give him some of my money," said Amy, running into her own room.

The minstrel played so long, going over his whole repertoire twice, that Mrs. Strong's suspicions were aroused, and when at last he went away, she asked Amy, —

"How much money did you give him?"

"A quarter," said Amy.

"Why Amy, that was too much. Five or ten cents would have been ample. What did he say?"

"He said, 'What makes you give me so much?' I said 'Because you are such an old man.' Then he looked pleased, and said, 'Thank you kindly, little miss.'"

Mrs. Strong well knew how tender Amy's loving heart was towards the poor, towards animals and little children, towards all that needed help or protection. When she and her mother were in the city together, she thought her mother very hard-hearted because she passed the lame man playing the accordion on the sidewalk near Shillito's, and all the other beggars, without giving them anything.

"Why don't you give him something, mamma?" she always pleaded.

After luncheon, the children gathered on the hillside to play in the hay. Mr. Green was not there, and Mrs. Strong sympathized too strongly with their fun to interfere unless they really did something quite unallowable, so there was nothing to hinder their sport.

"Let's make a great bird's nest," proposed Amy.

The children brought armfuls of hay up the hill, working manfully in the hot sun. Perspiration ran down Rob's face as he plied the rake. As it tickled his face, he rubbed it with his hands. Cincinnati grass being usually somewhat sooty, Rob's hands were anything but white, and his face soon wore a coat of color that caused Kitty to say,

"Rob Clover! How you do look! You are as black as Mr. Green."

"You need n't laugh at me," said Rob, as the children began to laugh. "You're all as black as I am. Kitty has a black spot on the end of her nose. I don't care how I look. I'm having a good time."

"We can play we are crows," said Irene.

Duke was in the very thick of the fun, galloping

up and down the hill, barking, and acting as if he wanted to carry hay himself. Rob threw a large arm-full of hay on him, completely burying him.

"I should n't think you would treat Duke so, Rob," said Amy.

"Oh, he does n't mind it. He likes it, don't you, old boy?"

Duke, struggling out from under the hay, barked and bounced about, entering into the fun as if he were a boy himself.

When the big nest was done, Amy said,

"Now all you younger children must get into the nest and be little birds."

The children all climbed over into the hollow left in the centre of the hay. Duke too scrambled in with the rest, and sat in the midst, his mouth joyfully open in a kind of amiable dog smile.

"Do look at Duke," said Kitty. "Is n't he a funny bird?"

"Now Rob and Kitty and Irene and I will be the father and mother birds, and fly away and bring you food," said Amy.

Mrs. Strong, looking out the bay window, thought the children made a pretty sight. Nestled in the circle of hay, nothing could be seen of them but their heads; brown heads, black heads, golden heads, curly heads, and straight locks, with Duke's handsome brown head in the midst. Amy, Irene and Kitty, in their bright gingham dresses, their heads bare, their hair flying out as they ran up and down, fluttering their arms for wings, tried in vain to appease the hunger of their little ones, who, with open mouths, kept up loud cries of "Peep, peep," "Caw, caw," "Cock-a-

doodle-doo," while Duke, animated by the tumult, barked loudly. Rob, meantime, was sitting comfortably up in Amy's tree seat.

"I don't think it's fair for the father bird not to work any," said Kitty. "You ought to come and help us, Rob. We can't get enough for the little birds to eat, even if we fly like lightning."

"Caw, caw," "Peep, peep," "Bow wow," came from the nest louder than ever at this.

"Poor little things, they are starving," said Amy, flying with a leaf in each hand to the nest.

"Aren't you coming to help us, Rob?" asked Kitty.

"I've flown up here to keep watch and see if an enemy is coming," said Rob. "Crows always have a sentinel."

An enemy was indeed coming, for down the hill from the street now came running Ben Bruce, Paul Williams, Ned Frazier, and two of the Barr boys. They too had a mind to play in the hay. But the big boys played so roughly. The first thing they did was to snatch up hay and completely bury the birdlings in the nest in spite of their loud cries and struggles. When Rob, Kitty, and the rest flew to the defence of their nest, they too were stifled in hay. Then they knocked each other down, and tried to bury each other up in hay.

Mrs. Strong, attracted by the tumult, came to her window to see hay being strewn about the lawn, driveway, everywhere it ought not to be. Her call from the window, and the sudden appearance of Mr. Green, put the enemy to flight. Messengers began to arrive to call the younger children home, because it

was time for them to be civilized for dinner, after Saturday's long play, by baths and clean clothes.

"Don't you and Kitty go quite yet," whispered Amy to Irene. "I want to show you something pretty."

When the younger children were safely off, Amy said,

"Girls, Mrs. Chickabod has hatched at last. She has seven beautiful little chickens. Is n't that splendid? Mr. Green is going to put her in a coop for me now. I did n't want the little children to know about it because they always want to hold the chickens, and that troubles the old hen and makes her anxious."

The girls went down to the stable, and watched Mr. Green take Mrs. Chickabod off her nest, and install her in a spacious coop in Palace Court, as Amy called that part of the driveway near the stable where her hen-coops stood. They helped Amy catch the little downy balls of chickens to carry out to the distressed mother.

"Did you ever see anything so sweet?" said Amy, in whose fond eyes the last brood of chickens was always the most charming.

"They are really too cunning for anything," said Irene.

"What are you going to call them, Amy?" asked Kitty. The names of Amy's chickens were sure to be interesting.

"Why, they are just seven, you know, so I call them Mrs. Chickabod's Week."

"Mrs. Chickabod's Week!" exclaimed Kitty. "How queer."

"Oh, no. They are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I know every one of them. That spry little one, who always crowds in first, and gets the best of everything for himself, is Monday. That sorry little one that the old hen stepped on, is Friday. He seems very unlucky. Saturday is all black, to contrast with Sunday, that pure white one. Thursday has white spots on his wings, that round, brown little fellow is Tuesday, and Wednesday has a black tail and wings."

"What made you give them such odd names?" asked Irene. "Why did n't you give them romantic names, like your other chickens?"

"Oh, haven't I told you?" said Amy. "It is so unfortunate. Queen Anne, Lady Rowena, and Victoria have all turned out to be roosters! And so has Mother Dorcas. I've changed his name to Dorcas Boy. They are all getting little combs, and their tails are sprouting out so comically, and Lady Rowena tries to crow. It is so funny to hear him! He feels so important, and he gives such a weak, squawky crow. I mean after this, to give all my chickens names that will fit any one."

"That's a good plan," said Irene. "But I must run home now, and dress for dinner."

Any one seeing the Hillside Avenue children at their Saturday afternoon play, in the old clothes reserved by their wise mothers for that day, would hardly have believed them the same young folks, when, after dinner, washed, curled and brushed, the little girls often in white dresses, they strolled up and down the quiet street in the pleasant dusk of the summer evening, or played about the lawns, a pretty sight.

CHAPTER II.

FAIRYLAND.

THE Hillside Avenue children who attended the Sunday school of Dr. Taylor's church usually planned to walk up together Sundays. The clan gathered on the way, till there was quite a group of the little friends chatting pleasantly along as they walked, and a very perceptible swelling of the Sunday School ranks when the Hillside Avenue delegation walked in.

One pleasant June morning, Dr. Taylor talked to the Sunday School children about flowers, taking for his text the flowers that the children had just brought in. He told them something about the magnificence of King Solomon of old. Then he had Max Goldschmidt write on the board this verse, which the children read in concert several times, until they were able to repeat it with the board turned away from them, face to the wall.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Who said this ?" asked Dr. Taylor.

"Jesus," replied several voices.

“Now, children,” said Dr. Taylor, “I want you to find out for yourselves and tell me next Sunday whether Jesus really intended to say that the wild lilies, or any flower, were more beautiful than the gorgeous robes of King Solomon, or whether this saying was only what we call a figure of speech,—a strong way of putting a statement; as, for instance, when a boy says, ‘My feet are frozen,’ when he only means they are very cold; or when a girl tells her mother, ‘I shall die, I know I shall, if I have to do all these problems to-night. There’s at least a hundred of them!’ when she merely means that she has more problems to do than she enjoys.”

Amy and Kitty exchanged smiles at this.

“If you have a magnifying glass,” continued Dr. Taylor, “when you go home examine the flowers through it, and then the finest ribbons, silks, and stuffs that you can find. Then, next Sunday, tell me whether you think Jesus meant that verse you have learned for an exact statement or not. Now rise, and we will sing,

“Hark! the lilies whisper
Tenderly and low,
In our grace and beauty,
See how fair we grow.

“Hark! the roses speaking,
Telling all abroad,
Their sweet, wondrous story
Of the love of God.”

Amy, who had listened intently, was greatly interested in this suggestion, and resolved to try the experiment that very afternoon with her father’s

magnifying glass. Soon after dinner, she secured the glass, and taking it, with bits of the choicest satin, silk, velvet, and lace from the treasures of her piece-bag, where she stored all sorts of odds and ends for dolls' clothes, went out into the flower-garden.

Mrs. Strong was seated on a garden bench reading in what she called her summer parlor, under the thick shade of a group of young maples one side the flower-beds, behind a large rhododendron bush that concealed her from passers by. The cool shade of the maples fell waveringly on her book, as a gentle south breeze blew fitfully, wafting mingled sweet odors of lilies, mignonette, and heliotrope from the flower beds; and if, now and then, a green and yellow spider, a black cricket, or insect of some unknown species ran across the book's pages, or ventured up the reader's white dress skirt, it seemed only a part of the friendliness of Mother Nature, assuring the intruder, "You are one of us."

Amidst this surrounding sense of nature's peace and beauty, Mrs. Strong read on, pleasantly conscious all the time of the presence of her little daughter flitting about among the flower-beds, looking, in her white dress and with her sunny, flowing hair, like a new species of white and yellow butterfly, as she hovered now over this flower, now over that.

By and by, Amy, with her dress skirt held up full of flowers and leaves, came and sat down on the bench beside her mother, greeted only with a loving smile, as Mrs. Strong looked up a moment from her book, and then read on.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed presently. "Do please stop reading and look through this glass a

minute. You never saw anything so wonderful ! It is exactly as Dr. Taylor said. The flowers are far the most beautiful. See, — the more you magnify a rose leaf, the finer and more wonderful it is. Only look into the heart of this spider lily, and see how pretty those little things in the centre look through the glass."

"Those are the stamens and pistil," said Mrs. Strong, as she put her eye to the glass.

"Oh, yes, I remember. You told me that once before. And see how dainty and pretty each tiny flower on this stalk of mignonette is, magnified. The leaves of this white lily are so silken and gorgeous. See the pretty specked spots on this catalpa blossom. Even the green leaves are beautiful. You can see all the network of little veins running about, and yet the leaf looks just as fine and silky when it is magnified. Do look at the under side of this begonia leaf. Is n't it beautiful, all covered with thousands of silvery hairs, and such lovely coloring in the veins that you can't see without the glass ?"

"Yes, the flowers are really wonderfully beautiful examined through the glass," said Mrs. Strong, becoming herself so fascinated that she quite forgot her book, and entered into Amy's new enthusiasm in the most satisfactory manner. "It is like peeping into another world."

"Is n't it ?" said Amy. "Just like peeping through a little window into the heart of fairyland, and spying out all the fairies' secrets. Now I want you to look at some of King Solomon's raiment."

Her mother smiled at this.

"Ah now, you need n't laugh, mamma. Of course

he must have worn silks, and velvets, and satins. Then I suppose he wore cloth of gold too, he was such a magnificent king. I have a little bit of gold embroidery that Cousin Elizabeth gave me. I am saving it to make the Countess Compositici's court train. Look at it through the glass. Did you ever see anything so coarse and scratchy looking?"

"Now I want you," continued Amy, all animation, for there is nothing so delightful as discovering things for oneself, "to look at this piece of blue velvet. Does n't it look exactly like a carpet? And these bits of silk and ribbon look as coarse as old blankets, all great lumpy threads, coarsely matted together. And this lace that I thought so fine and delicate looks like a strainer. The prettiest cloths I can find look coarse and ugly through the glass, but every leaf and flower is only more lovely the more it is magnified. So it is really true, you see, that the flowers were arrayed much more beautifully than King Solomon."

"Yes," said her mother, "there is no comparison between the works of God and the attempts of man. That is the idea which Dr. Taylor meant to impress upon you. The more closely we study any natural object the more wonderful it grows, the more we find yet to learn, and the more are we awed by a sense of the great wonder-working power behind all nature."

"I am going to examine everything," said Amy, "and see if that is really as true of other things as of flowers."

So she went about with her magnifying glass, examining first pebbles from the driveway, — pebbles whose rough crevices and holes proved to be won-

derful caves and grottos, lined with sparkling crystals.

"It is exactly as if I were a fairy, and waved my magic wand over them," thought Amy, delighted at the new world of which she was catching glimpses, the world too delicate and fine for our gross eyes.

Then she put the glass on a tree trunk and peeped through.

"Oh, mamma!" she cried, "this white, scaly stuff where the bark is rough is really eggs, a nest full of tiny, oblong, white eggs! And while I was looking, a little ant ran under the glass. You ought to have seen what a monster he looked. Oh, I think this is so interesting!"

Amy ran about until she was tired, with the glass at her eye, examining everything, even to the fur of Prince, the cat, which looked, she said, "like a tropical forest."

"Even a chicken's feather is pretty, magnified," she said. "See, mamma. Please look once more. This is one of my dear Dorcas Boy's cunning white feathers. Now I know what makes them hold together so strongly and smoothly. Each little featherlet has tiny hooks, and fits into its neighbor so closely you can hardly pull them apart."

"That is what makes Dorcas Boy's rain cloak so tight and waterproof," said her mother. "You pity the chickens when you see them out in the rain, all dripping. But their feathers shed the rain much better than your umbrella."

At last Amy, tired of running about, mounted into her tree seat, taking with her several books, her drawing-block and pencil, and box of colored crayons.

She always felt rich with many books around her, even if she did not read them all, for, as she phrased it, she loved "to wallow in books." She was very fond of this seat high up in the group of ailanthus trees, that her brother Philip had made her when she was much younger. To-day it seemed particularly pleasant. The flower garden looked like a many-colored Persian rug spread on the greed sward, with all the bright reds and pinks, yellows and various greens of roses, geraniums, marigolds, and California poppies. The roses were beginning to fade, but the tall white lily stalks stood up all over the beds, like pure white fairies, Amy thought, and the catalpa tree on the front lawn, Amy's favorite tree for climbing, rose up against the dark green of the other trees, a white dome of flowers.

Mr. Green's hay filled the air with sweetness, and up in the tree, over Amy's head, a robin lit and poured his joy out in fearless song, knowing, it seemed, the kindness filling the little girl's heart for all living things. Amy wished she had one of his bright breast-feathers to examine through the magnifying glass; but the robin was not so obliging as to shed even a featherlet. Instead, he flew down to join his mate on the new-mown patch on the hillside, all alive to-day with chickens, robins, and big purple-black grackles hopping about, intent on catching the insects whose hidden homes had been ruthlessly exposed by the cutting of their grass shelter. Amy, with her white dress, her flowing bright hair, and her pure, innocent face, framed in by the green leaves, fitted well into the peaceful picture.

First she read a while in "The Last of the

Mohicans," which gave her an agreeable sense of wild life in the unbroken wilderness. Then she drew a picture of an unspeakably lovely maiden being dragged away into captivity by two Indians, on whom all the hues of the colored crayon box were lavished to make them sufficiently blood-thirsty. Then she began to write a story. Absorbed in this, she was suddenly startled by having the slipper pulled off the foot which swayed to and fro in the ardor of composition.

"Oh!" screamed Amy, jumping up, "what's that?"

Kitty came laughing from behind the tree.

"Here's your slipper," she said. "I wanted to see if I could get it without your noticing. You never know anything when you are reading or drawing. What are you doing now?"

"I've almost finished a story," said Amy. "Come up here, and I will read it to you."

Kitty, glad to have Sunday afternoon so agreeably beguiled, willingly climbed up into the seat, which was quite large enough for three little girls.

Amy's story bore this imposing heading.

"THE MAGICAL KITE.

BY AMY STRONG, AUTHOR OF 'MY DOGGIE, &c., &c.'

"Once upon a time (for all stories begin that way), there was a king called King Crombercross, because he was so cross, and then, besides, he was very changeable, and 'cromber' meant changeable, in the subjects' language. The king did not know what the word meant, but, as it sounded very grand to him,

he thought it was a compliment, and smiled to himself when he thought how respectful his courtiers were. He naturally grew very vain, and thought there was nothing he could not do or say. What was worse, he thought the whole world belonged to him, and had to mind him. Of course this was very wrong, but the poor king had no one to tell him better, so I do not think it was entirely his fault.

“The queen was as bad as the king, and so were half the courtiers, but the subjects were as good as any one. The kingdom did not flourish, though, because the bad courtiers would tell dreadful stories to their bad king about the good subjects, and the king was too lazy to tend to trying them himself; so he would turn them over to the bad judges, who were also too lazy to try them, so they would order them to be executed, and supposed that was the end of it. But it was not, for the executioners were too lazy to execute them; so they let the men go, and they ran away, and never came back to King Crombercross’s kingdom.

“One day the whole kingdom was draped in dark red and olive green (the royal colors), and there was music and dancing, and every one was saying, ‘Have you seen the royal prince yet?’ ‘Have you heard how beautiful his royal majesty is?’ or ‘Have you heard how angry the queen is?’

“‘How angry the queen is!’ you exclaim. Yes, and the king too; for they had always wanted a daughter so that she could marry the king of the next country, so that he would not make so much war with their country; and now it was a son. No words could express their indignation; but of course they did not wish to show it before the court, so they gave

a great ball, and invited all the men, women, and children in the kingdom to come and see the little prince.

“If beauty, happiness, strength, love for all, and wealth make a prince, this boy was surely a prince in the fullest sense of the word. Any one would know he was a prince if he had not had a rag, or a cent in his pocket, because his manner was so noble.

Well, the prince grew and grew, until he was finally twelve years old, and at that age all boys love to fly kites. At twelve years Prince Raymond was a handsome lad of about four feet tall, with a beautiful complexion, curly brown hair, and, what was his greatest beauty, a pair of clear brown eyes that looked straight at you. Slim, bright, possessed of all his senses, and a prince, Raymond should have been the happiest boy in the world; but with all his gifts, happiness was not one of them. Just now the king and queen feigned to love him, because they had planned that he should marry the neighboring king's daughter, and so inherit that kingdom. The prince knew what his father was planning, and it made him very unhappy, for he did not like the princess, who was very ugly, and cruel, and bad. But he did not say anything, because he thought when the time came he would run away to another country where his father would never find him. The king now showed him every attention, and sent all over the country for new toys for him.

“One day, when the messengers came back with the prince's new toys, they brought word that the neighboring king was going to make war against King Crombercross unless he let Prince Raymond marry

his daughter right away. King Crombercross immediately called Prince Raymond to him and instructed him how to behave, and then told him he could have one hour's play before he went.

"Among the new toys that had just arrived was a large kite, and the prince thought he would fly it before he went. As he saw the kite floating far above his head, he said, —

"‘Oh, if I were only with you, kite, away from care and sorrow, then I would not have to marry the princess I despise. But alas, that wish is vain.’

"He sighed, but suddenly stopped in the middle of his sigh, for the kite suddenly opened the mouth that was painted on it, and said in a hoarse voice, (Amy spelled it "horse," but that made no difference in her own and Kitty's intense interest in the tale), —

"‘Your wish is not in vain, young prince. I was made on purpose to rescue you from so great an unhappiness as would be your fate otherwise.’

"There was something very remarkable about this kite. It was very large, very, and on its enormous surface was painted a face the features of which were in good comparison with the size of the kite. Raymond knew enough of art to know that an Egyptian artist must have painted it, and a good many hundred years ago, too. There was a strange mixture of old Egyptian art and a sort of mermaiden character about it, for the tail of the kite was made of sea moss, and a fringe of the same hung over the head. Prince Raymond noticed when he flew the kite, that the long tail took various shapes, nearly all of sea monsters, which dived in the air as if they were in the sea.

"When the kite opened its mouth, the blue October

sky shone through it. The kite seemed to look down on the prince in a very fatherly, meaning way, which made him feel a strange awe, though the look was very kind and beneficent.

“‘Listen,’ said the kite. ‘I am many centuries old. I have been waiting, waiting patiently, and learning wisdom always, until I should find my master, whom the old prophets in Egypt told me of, and now, after many, many centuries, I have at last found him.’

“The kite heaved a long sigh, which made it quiver in the air, which was warm with the golden sunshine. Away in the meadows came the sound of a horn. It was the mid-day horn, a sign for the reapers to rest from their labors. It seemed to rouse the kite, for he shook himself and said, —

“‘Make haste. I can already see the messenger they send to call you. Hold on to my tail. We have tarried too long. We are both in danger of being discovered!’

“Prince Raymond took hold of the kite’s tail, and immediately felt himself rising in the air. The sensation was a very curious one; but after a while he got used to it, and enjoyed it. He tied the tail of the kite around his waist so he would not have to think of holding on, and the mighty kite soared away into the blue depths of the sky, and among the fleecy white clouds.

“The kite did not speak and neither did Raymond, for the beauty and stillness were too beautiful to be broken by words; the intense blue above, the blue rivers, fertile green meadows, mighty forests and tossing oceans, small villages, busy cities, a lonely

hermitage surrounded by forests, fashionable country resorts, an English lord's castle, surrounded with parks in which the deer gambolled among the trees, or hares ran startled to their homes under the ferns, where cool fountains splashed against their marble margin; or again they saw a crowded tenement where lived poor, cast-off wretches, only wretchedness, but owned by the same lord. Or over burning deserts, where perhaps along the dreary waste of sand there slowly toiled a caravan of merchants going to India, risking their lives under the scorching sun for wealth, — ”

Here Amy paused a moment to take breath, and Kitty said,

“I wish you would go on and tell what became of Prince Raymond. I don't care much for this part.”

“Why, don't you?” said Amy. “I think this is the best part. It is so fascinating to imagine yourself floating through the sky, looking down on the whole world.” And she continued :

— “or through a mountain glen, where beside a rivulet falling tumultuously over moss-covered boulders, stood a little cottage, not grand like the nobleman's castle, but beautiful in the great love and charity within it.

“So they travelled on and on till it became quite dark; but still the kite did not stop, and the prince began to think he should starve, when he saw the kite was slowly sinking to the ground, and finally it fell on the earth, apparently exhausted. They were on a small island which was alone in the middle of the Indian Ocean. On the ocean was a strange-looking ship with foreign sailors climbing up its masts.

But the ship passed by, and Prince Raymond was left alone with the Magical Kite.

“It was now dark, and Prince Raymond was wondering what he was to do, when he saw a light a little way off. Going to the spot, he saw a procession of figures all in white, deeply veiled. They each bore a torch, and as they drew near, they perceived him. At their head, and apparently leading them, was a figure clothed entirely in white, who acted like a queen, whom all the other women obeyed. When she saw Prince Raymond she lifted her veil, and the prince beheld a most beautiful princess with a crown on her head made of every gem or jewel that was ever found. Her dress was all the colors of the rainbow — ”

“You just said that she was dressed all in white,” objected Kitty.

“That was because her veil was white, and covered her dress,” said Amy. —

“She took the prince by the hand, and led him to the kite, for the kite had survived. The kite immediately exclaimed,

“‘It is the beautiful Princess Gondolia! We are indeed fortunate to have met her.’

“The rest of what he said was not audible, for his voice sank as he spoke, as if he were thinking of something a long way off.

“‘You are my deliverer,’ said the princess, ‘and must do exactly as the kite says, for it is the wisest kite in the world.’ — That’s all,” said Amy, stopping abruptly.

“Why, that’s too bad!” exclaimed Kitty; “just as it was most interesting.”

"I can tell you how it's going to end," said Amy. "Of course Prince Raymond immediately falls in love with the Princess Gondolia —"

"Of course," said Kitty.

"And he has to fight the most terrible battles you can imagine, to deliver her from a wicked enchanter who has her in his power. Then they are married, and the kite takes them back to King Crombercross's land, where they find that the good subjects have risen up and killed the wicked king and queen. The subjects give a grand reception to their favorite, Prince Raymond, and his lovely bride, and then they all live happily forever after."

"That's a very good story," said Kitty.

Here the Clover's tea-bell rang.

"Do come over after tea, Kitty," said Amy. "I want to talk over our lawn fête."

"Do you think we can have one this year?" said Kitty. "I thought your mother said she could n't have it here again because we wore off the grass so last year. And my mother doesn't want it, and I don't believe Mrs. Dawson does."

"I have a new plan," said Amy, whose active brain was always teeming with plans and ideas. "Come over as soon as you get through tea, and we will talk it all over."

CHAPTER III.

AMY'S NEW PLAN.

DINNER being at noon on Sunday, the light tea was soon over. After tea, Irene came over, and she, Amy, and Kitty sat on the Strong's porch steps to hear Amy's plans for the lawn fête.

Two years before, in the summer vacation, when the children wanted something new to do, they had decided to hold a fair in the Clover's stable, for the "benefit of the Fresh Air Fund," they told their mothers. Mrs. Clover gave Rob and Kitty an old rug to spread on the floor, and the children worked so hard to decorate the walls with flags, strips of bright cloth, and green boughs, that they succeeded in transforming the stable into quite a fairy bower. The mothers considered the "fair" only one of the children's many games, like "circus" or "Indian" or "house-keeping," or whatever happened to be their fancy for the time. One cent admission was charged.

Greatly to every one's surprise, the children actually made six dollars and sixty-four cents, which sum was duly forwarded to the Fresh Air Fund, and formally acknowledged by the secretary.

The following summer, Amy said to her mother,

"We want to have a lawn fête this year. May we have it on our lawn, mamma?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Strong, not taking the affair at all seriously, thinking it only one of Amy's many large schemes, which often came to naught, only lasting till some new idea struck her fertile fancy.

"She will probably work for the fête a few days, and then forget all about it," thought her mother, quite easy about her promise.

But when, a week before the day set for the fête, Mrs. Strong found that Amy and her friends had been industriously selling tickets for it all over the neighborhood, and that the proceeds, even at the moderate price of three cents for grown folk and one cent for children, already amounted to three dollars and a half, she felt it time to bestir herself.

"If half Edgeton are coming to our place Saturday afternoon, expecting to find a fête, evidently we must try to have something for them," she said.

"I told you, mamma, all the time, this was going to be a real fête," said Amy. "Kitty and I have made ever so many fancy articles. We mean to make a great deal of money this year, twice as much as we did last."

The mothers, finding the children were really in earnest, now took hold at the last moment, and aided their efforts. The Strong's lawn was beautiful that Saturday afternoon in June, with a long row of Japanese lanterns that Mrs. Herndon loaned, swaying on a cord stretched from tree to tree across the front, with bright flags fluttering, and two white tents under the trees, the tables gayly decorated, and the place swarming with children and even a good many grown folks.

The proceeds of this fête amounted to over twenty-

nine dollars. The children were overjoyed with this success, especially when the secretary of the Fresh Air Society sent out tickets, making each little worker an honorary member of the society for a year. But there was no more grass on the Strong's front lawn that year. Worn bare and trampled, especially around the spot where the fancy table had stood, it looked like a public-school yard.

Now that all the children would so soon be out of school, Amy felt that it was time to begin working for another fête. But her mother did not eagerly welcome the idea of another fête on their own lawn, nor indeed did any of the mothers on the avenue seem to want it.

"I am entirely willing you should have a fête, Amy," said her mother. "Indeed, I think it a good thing for you children to do. But I fear you will not be able to find a suitable place for it. Our lawn has hardly recovered yet, although your father had Mr. Green sow grass-seed all over it last fall."

Knowing this coolness of the mothers towards their pet scheme, Kitty and Irene were naturally anxious to hear Amy's plan.

"Oh, I do so hope we can have the fête. It must be such fun," said Irene, who had not been living in Edgeton when the last memorable fête occurred.

"It is, lots of fun," said Kitty. "I teased mother to let me have it, but our front lawn is smaller than Amy's and all lies right in front of the house. Mother says there would n't be a spear of grass left on it, and I guess she is right."

"Laura says her mother can't have it there," said Irene. "I don't see what we are to do."

"I have thought of the very best place on the avenue, if we can only get it," said Amy. "You know Dr. Trimble's place is right on the corner, and it is very large. And it runs down the hill, far from his house, to Grand Avenue. The fête could be mostly down the hill away from his house."

"Oh, what a lovely idea!" cried Kitty and Irene, clapping their hands for joy. "What a perfectly splendid place for it! But do you suppose Dr. Trimble will let us have it there?"

"I don't know," said Amy. "Let's go right over and ask him about it."

The three girls went down the street, their arms around each other's waists, their heads close together as they talked in low tones, with such an air of secrecy that Claribel, Lily, the little Goldschmidts and Neales and Boyds all perceived immediately that something of importance was in the wind, and, fired with curiosity, ran after them, crying,

"What is it? Where are you all going? What are you going to do? May we go too?"

"No, you can't come now," said Amy, "because we are going down to see Dr. Trimble on business. We'll tell you all about it by and by."

The little folks had to content themselves with this, while the "big" girls marched on with all the importance becoming their mission.

They found Dr. and Mrs. Trimble sitting on their broad side-porch which commanded a wide view of the western sky. Hillside Avenue was so overhung with elms that Dr. Trimble's place was almost the only spot in summer where there was an unobstructed view of the sunset. The sky was radiant

to-night, radiant and peaceful, and its bright tints were reflected on the pale face and gray hair of Mrs. Trimble, a gentle, delicate lady, who greeted the children cordially, as did also the doctor, a ruddy faced old gentleman, with snow-white hair and side whiskers. Lying on the ground out under the beech-tree, two of the Trimble boys were idly touching their mandolins, the tinkling music fitting well into the peacefulness of the evening.

Dr. and Mrs. Trimble had no young children, but when their four grandchildren came on from Connecticut their place was always a popular resort for the children of the avenue, so the girls felt enough acquaintance to unfold their plans with confidence. Amy's shyness made her push Kitty forward as spokesman.

"You see, Dr. Trimble," explained Kitty, "we thought this would be such a good place for the fête because it is on the corner. Of course all the Hillside Avenue people will come anyway. But here people going by on Grand Avenue will see it too, and come in. And we thought we could put most of the tables down the hill in the hollow, far away from the house, so it wouldn't matter if the grass were a little worn."

"When do you propose to have your fête?" asked the Doctor, his eyes twinkling through his glasses, as he looked at the eager little girls.

"Two weeks from next Saturday," said Amy, forgetting to be shy in her eagerness about the fête. "We want to have it soon, before every one goes away for the summer."

"Well, mother, what do you say?" said the Doctor,

turning to his wife. "Do you feel equal to giving a lawn fête?"

"If the children want it so much, I think we may as well let them have it here," said Mrs. Trimble. "I see no objections."

"Neither do I," said the Doctor. "You may consider it settled then, girls."

"Oh, thank you, thank you so much, Dr. Trimble," cried the girls, as they ran joyfully off.

The first thing was to run across the avenue to Laura Dawson's and tell her the good news, and engage her to be sure and come over to Amy's the next day, as soon as she and Kitty were home from school, to engage in the important work of appointing committees. Then they announced the great news of the coming festivity to all the children up and down the avenue, who were delighted, and hung about the girls to talk over their many plans.

Amy saw Dr. Hough's carriage standing before her house, and ran home to see her friends, the doctor and his wife.

"I didn't know as I should see my little girl to-night," said the Doctor, taking Amy's slight hand affectionately in his big, strong clasp. "What important plan are you busy about now?"

Amy told Dr. Hough all about the proposed fête. Pulling out his pocket-book, the Doctor said,

"I must have two tickets to that lawn fête. How much are they, Amy?"

"We have raised the price this year to five cents for grown people," said Amy.

"Can't help it. I must have them," said the Doctor.

"Oh, thank you, Dr. Hough," said Amy, delighted

to have already sold two tickets, and more than ever confident that the fête would be a triumphant success. "I will give you the tickets as soon as they are printed. Ben Bruce and Rob are going to print them this week."

"All right," said the Doctor.

Then he began tugging at his coat-tail pocket, while Amy's eyes looked very expectant, for the Doctor's pockets were reservoirs of treasures for her collection. Pulling out a package, the Doctor said,

"This is a piece of picture rock from Colorado for your cabinet. Do you see the hills and clouds and shrubs on it?"

"Oh, yes, plainly," said Amy. "Thank you so much, Dr. Hough. It looks like the most delicate painting."

"It was painted by the hand of the Great Artist, Amy," said the Doctor. "Hello!" he exclaimed, leaping up so suddenly that every one was startled. Seizing the straw hat from his head, while every one looked on in wonder, he clapped it up on the honeysuckle overhead, all hanging with blossoms that made the night air heavy with their fragrance.

"A night moth!" exclaimed the Doctor with much satisfaction, as he sat down with his captive in his hat. "A fine specimen too. Come here, Amy, and see him."

Dr. Hough took the fluttering creature into the light that shone out the open door from the hall gas, and showed her the large, handsome moth, looking like a great gray butterfly.

"He looks like a gray ghost of a butterfly," said Amy. "Butterflies are always so bright and gay."

"This is one of the owlet moths," said the Doctor, "so called because they only fly at night like the owls. They fly swiftly, and it is hard to catch one. Their gray color is for a purpose. Have you never noticed, Amy, how often insects on plants are the color of the leaf or flower?"

"Yes," said Amy. "There's the funniest bright yellow and black spider that has spun his web for two summers over mamma's yellow fleur-de-lis. He is exactly the color of the flowers."

"And you will find green insects on green leaves, and brown bugs on brown stems. There is a worm called the 'walking stick' that looks exactly like a stem of the tree he is on."

"Ugh! I picked one once," said Amy, shuddering at the disagreeable recollection.

"You mustn't say 'ugh,'" said the Doctor. "Collectors must be interested in all natural objects. That walking stick is a very interesting fellow. But what I wanted to call your attention to now is that this similarity in color between insects and the flowers they frequent is for a special purpose; to protect them from the sharp eyes of the birds that are always looking out for them."

"I never thought of that," said Amy.

"And so this night-moth is the color of the dusk, the twilight in which he flits about like a ghost, as you well said. If he were white or bright yellow, bats and owls would see him more easily, and his chances of life would be much less. Now we have examined him, we will let him fly back to his honey-cup."

But the released moth flew rapidly far away

from the dangerous vicinity of the tempting honey-suckle.

"When I was a boy,—" began the Doctor, as he settled himself back comfortably in his rocking-chair.

Amy pricked up her ears, for many interesting things had happened when Dr. Hough was a boy, almost equal to those great events of her father's boyhood, of which she never tired.

"I was very fond of hunting," continued the Doctor. "At least I called it hunting. Many a time I came home at night with an empty game-bag, and still emptier stomach. I'd give something now for the appetite I had then. The Cuvier Club's dinners now don't compare with my mother's suppers then. But prowling around all day with my gun in the woods gave me a capital chance to study into the habits of birds and animals, which always interested me. Long before I read anything about it in books, I well knew how wise and cunning the wild creatures are in hiding or escaping from their enemies. I have often picked up beetles that would lie on their backs on my hand motionless as if dead, as long as I held them; but let me drop them on the ground, and they were not long in vanishing. One day, by accident, I guess, I shot near enough to a little striped squirrel to stun it, I suppose. Anyway it fell out of the tree, and I picked it up, supposing it dead. I was surprised to find no wound on it. I laid it down on the leaves. It did not stir. I happened to turn around and walk off a few steps. When I came back, my squirrel was gone! He had feigned death to deceive me. I have seen a striped squirrel play the same trick on a cat, and get away from her."

"Some birds do the same thing," said Professor Strong.

"Yes," said the Doctor. "Some thrushes and sparrows are particularly artful. I well remember my disgust when I was a boy, the first time a thrush no bigger than my thumb outwitted me. In the woods I came upon a thrush that seemed to be hurt. She trailed her wing as if it were broken, and hopped feebly along, with a peculiar cry. I was overjoyed at this fine chance to capture a live thrush, and slipped cautiously towards her. But as I slipped along, so did she, managing to keep just far enough ahead of me to raise my hopes, and lure me on, but careful not to let me lay hands on her. When she had tolled me along a safe distance from her nest, whisk! up and away she flew, leaving me standing, open mouthed, staring after her."

Amy laughed at this picture of the Doctor's discomfiture by the small bird, and hoped for more stories. But here her mother called her into the dining-room to bring out some iced raspberry shrub to pass to their friends. The night was warm, and the bits of ice tinkled invitingly against the thin glasses, as Amy passed the tray around. The company sipped the shrub comfortably, inhaled the odor of the honeysuckles, and fell into a general chat not especially entertaining to Amy, so she slipped out on the lawn and amused herself by catching the fireflies that danced all over it, high and low, "like little stars," Amy thought. She played she was their queen, and that they were her rebellious subjects. As fast as caught they were "thrown into the crystal dungeon," as Amy called an inverted tumbler on the porch.

“I graciously pardon you this time. You are free. But never do it again,” said Amy, raising the tumbler and letting her prisoners go when she was tired of watching them. “I believe I will go in and write a poem about fireflies. They seem very poetical, flashing about in the dark.”

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARING FOR THE LAWN FÊTE.

THE meeting of the four girls at Amy's to appoint committees was entirely successful. First they appointed themselves to the positions they preferred, and then the other children to fill the remaining posts. So all was smooth sailing in the committee meeting. Amy and Kitty were to have the fancy table because they always had it, Irene the flower and fruit table, Dorothy Paxton the candy table, Laura the cake table.

But when they called the Brightside Club together, and announced their appointments, all was not so harmonious, and they experienced some of the trials familiar to the managers of grown-up fêtes.

"I don't want to bother with the ice-cream this year," said Ben Bruce. "I've had it every year. Max and Paul and I meant to get up a first-class lemonade and peanut stand."

The great point in having Ben in charge of the ice-cream table was that, as his father kept a cow, and his mother was notoriously generous, she was certain to donate a large quantity of ice-cream, which Ben would freeze himself, with a corresponding saving to the fête's fund.

"Oh, now, Ben, do please have the ice-cream," said

Irene. "You can put up your tent to sell it in, you know, and that will be so nice."

"You always do it so well," said Amy.

"No one can do it so well as you, Ben," said Kitty.

"Oh, do take it, Ben," pleaded Laura.

Thus flatteringly beset, good-natured Ben could but yield, and so that important point was settled.

But hardly was this off the committee's minds, when it developed that Dorothy was not sure she could take the candy table, her mother not being well, and dreading the work.

"Dear me!" said Amy. "What shall we do? Mrs. Paxton makes such delightful candy, and so much, too."

"Maud will help us, I know," said Kitty, "if we can only get some one to take the table. She makes splendid candy, and so does Josie Bruce."

"Frida wants to be on the fancy table," said Irene. "She says she doesn't want to take the lemonade table this year."

"Rob is determined to have the lemonade table," said Kitty. "He says the boys ought to have something."

"And little Claribel, and Lulu Boyd, and all the little girls want to have tables," said Amy.

"Why, they're not old enough. They don't know how to make change," said Kitty.

"If every one has a table, there will be no one left to buy our things," said Laura.

All these difficulties, and many more that developed from time to time, were happily smoothed over at last. Amy had not only considerable diplomacy, but also a kind heart and wanted every one to be happy,

and as she was the leader in the affair, the others were usually willing to follow her suggestions. But even Amy's composure was somewhat ruffled when she heard that Mrs. Herndon was going to get up a fancy table for Claribel and the other little girls. She felt her own peculiar domain poached upon, and poured out her sorrows to her mother at bedtime, the usual hour for special confidences.

"They are so little they will not know how to sell things, or make change, or anything. Dixon says he is going to help about it. Imagine Dixon tending a fancy table! We don't want everybody to have tables. Kitty and I have always had the fancy table, and we don't want to have another. It will spoil ours."

"I presume Mrs. Herndon will help the children sell their articles," said Mrs. Strong, "so there will be no trouble about that. And you know what you chiefly want, Amy, is to make all the money possible for the Fresh Air Fund. The more workers, the more you will make. You do not wish to be selfish in your charities, I am sure."

"No — o," said Amy, rather doubtfully. "Well, anyway, Kitty and I are going to get up perfectly lovely things this year. Irene is going to help us. She paints so well. And cousin Elizabeth will paint us some things, I know. And we are going to ask some of the other ladies to make things for us."

"I will make some pretty marble bags for you and fill them, besides donating a few articles I have bought at fairs and never used," said her mother.

"Oh, will you? How nice! I must go in town shopping this week, mamma."

"You have an engagement at the dentist's Satur-

day," said her mother. "You can do your shopping then."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Amy, at the mere word "dentist."

Kitty and Amy had a sort of dentist partnership. When either had to visit the dentist, it was found the greatest possible comfort and help to have the company of the sympathetic little friend, wonderfully shortening the hour in the detested chair. So the next Saturday, the devoted Kitty cheerfully spent an hour and a half shut up in Dr. Henry's little north office with her friend.

Amy, being delicate and nervous, suffered keenly when her over-sensitive teeth had to be filled. But she was learning self-control, and no longer groaned and twisted about, but sat so still, even when the sharp shooting pain sometimes brought tears to her eyes, that when Doctor Henry released her he said,

"Well, Miss Amy, you are improving wonderfully. That was rather a bad filling. You endured it as well as I could myself," which pleased Amy greatly.

She contrived to get all the pleasure possible out of the dreary business. When Dr. Henry raised her aloft in the huge chair by turning some mysterious machinery below, she said to Kitty,

"I am a princess, and this is my magic throne, that rises or falls as I will it."

When Dr. Henry strapped a piece of black rubber across her mouth she added to the effect by closing one eye and looking at Kitty so comically that Kitty laughed until Dr. Henry wondered what it could all be about. When he was called out of the room, she and Kitty entertained themselves by looking into all

his funny little mirrors that magnified their faces so that they hardly knew themselves. So they contrived to have some fun even at the dentist's.

Everything comes to an end at last, if we are only patient. So it was with Dr. Henry's labors. The happy moment came finally when he lowered the magic throne, saying,

"That is all for to-day."

Cheerfully did the little girls bid him adieu, and hasten away for the all-important shopping.

"First we must get our soda-water," said Amy, for her mother had strengthened her firmness in the dentist's chair by this prospective reward of soda-water for herself and Kitty, also by a liberal addition to her shopping fund.

As Amy and Kitty knew exactly what they wanted, — a great saving of time to shoppers, — their purchases were soon made. A bolt of baby ribbon at Shillito's, owls, mice, tiny jugs, pitchers, dolls, and mats at the Japanese store; and, above all, many articles at the five-cent store, for experience had taught the girls the wisdom of having some cheap articles to catch the pennies of their small patrons. At the five-cent store they bought several little barrels of pretty yellow clothes-pins at five cents apiece. They would tie the clothes-pins in two bunches with blue baby ribbon, and sell each for five cents, and fill the barrel with three cents' worth of marbles and sell that for five cents too, so this really was a great investment.

"We must be sure to have plenty of things for boys," said Amy, "there are so many boys on our street."

"Here are some little iron hatchets, just as cunning

as they can be," said Kitty. "I know Rob will buy one of these hatchets."

A supply of hatchets was bought, also whips, whistles, little stoves, and sets of dolls' tea dishes.

"All these things we pay five cents for, we ought to sell for six or seven cents," said Amy, "so we can make a profit."

"I know it," said Kitty. "I think we might sell these hatchets for eight."

"We might ask eight to begin with, and then mark them down to seven if they don't sell," said the wise Amy. "That's the way they often do with the fancy articles at our church fairs."

The girls worked not only enthusiastically, but really laboriously, preparing for the fair. Irene and Amy spent the mornings together, pasting and painting. Amy took a pair of the Japanese owlets and fastened them on a twig side by side, a twig wound with bright ribbon, and on the head of the mother owlet, to distinguish her from the father, she put a jaunty cap trimmed with ribbon. This proved an immediate financial success, as Miss Alden, Amy's music teacher, cheerfully paid fifteen cents for a twig of owlets the moment Amy showed it to her; Amy bought another herself, and the rest were quickly snapped up the day of the fête.

After school, Kitty, Laura, and Frida joined the others, and they had regular sewing societies for the fair, dressing dolls, making marble bags, pin-cushions, and court-plaster cases; also shaving-paper holders to catch the fathers' quarters.

Amy kept all the fancy articles in an unused bureau in "grandma's room." Often were the treas-

ures of this bureau arranged in fascinating array on the bed, and her mother, Bridget, and Nora called upon to come and admire them. Often too, did a flock of little girls run gaily up the stairs, with much chattering and giggling by the way, escorted by the proud Amy, to have a confidential peep at the glories of the coming fancy table.

In spite of the throes of the final examinations under which all the public school children were now groaning, Laura found time to briskly canvass the avenue for cake, her example being imitated by the children in charge of the other tables. Most of the ladies on the avenue promised the active little canvassers cake, candy, lemons, fruit, and so on. When children undertake in earnest to do anything, it is sure to be accomplished. There is no resisting the young hearts, so full of life, of generous enthusiasm.

Every night, Amy, whose whole heart was absorbed by the great coming event, entertained her father and mother at the dinner table by rapturous accounts of some new items of good fortune, such as, —

“Oh mamma, papa, what do you think? Cousin Elizabeth has written her friends in Washington about our fête, and they are actually going to send her a whole box of things for our fancy table! Is n't that gorgeous? The letter came today. Cousin Elizabeth called me in to see it, and I really jumped up and down for joy. Then she showed me some of the loveliest dolls' screens she has painted for us. I mean to buy one for my doll-house. And she is going to dress Ronald and Jack up like little Italian boys and have them sell popcorn. She is painting pretty boxes now for the popcorn. Is n't that lovely? Cousin Elizabeth is so kind.”

Another time the great items were, "Ben Bruce told me to-day such a delightful plan he has. He is going to be dressed like a French cook to sell his ice-cream. His sister Josie is making him a real cook's cap and apron now. Won't he look funny? And I have a new idea."

"I should think your ideas would be nearly exhausted by this time, Amy," said her mother.

"No. I only thought of this to-day. I'm going to write to Aunt Leigh and Cousin Emma to-day about our fête, and see if they don't want to send something for our table. Aunt Leigh does so much fancy work, and Cousin Emma paints china, you know."

The letter was written that very evening, and duly despatched to Philadelphia. Only the day before the fête, when Amy eagerly ran out on the porch to meet the postman and secure the mail, there was the much expected letter from Philadelphia. Amy tore it open, and found to her delight not only a kind letter wishing her much success, but a check for two dollars, payable to "Amy Strong."

"Even papa cannot draw the money on this check unless I endorse it," Amy told the children, as she ran around to display the wonderful bit of paper. It was a great moment when, with much care, in her best hand, she inscribed "Amy Strong" on the check, and received two dollars on the spot from papa.

The evening before the fête, the door bell rang. Amy, who was all excitement now that the great day was so near, ran out in the hall to find Nora bringing in a large paper box.

"It's for you, Miss Amy," she said. "Jamie Richardson brought it. He said it was some things that his sister Marie had made for the fair."

Marie was one of the little friends who attended Sunday-school with Amy and Kitty. She had been ill for weeks with typhoid fever; had had a relapse, and almost died, and was still confined to her bed, weak and emaciated, slowly struggling back again to life. The girls could hardly wait to take the cover off the box.

“Was n’t it sweet in Marie to do this?” said Amy.

Marie had shown much taste and ingenuity in her fancy articles. There were many paper flowers, roses and snowballs, almost as natural as life; two pretty lamp shades made of crêpe paper, and a little doll made of cotton batting, her dress ingeniously contrived from a gay Japanese mat, and a fine bonnet adorning her head, where Marie had drawn her expressive features with ink.

“Think of Marie lying in bed, making all these things,” said Amy.

“They are perfectly lovely,” said Irene. “I don’t see how she did it.”

“I will buy the cotton batting doll,” said Mrs. Strong. “It shall go into my Christmas drawer. How touching it is to think of that child on her sick bed working so hard to help give little poor children an outing in the country!”

“We must send her something from our table, Amy,” said Kitty.

“We will send her one of Cousin Elizabeth’s doll’s screens,” said Amy. “And after the fête is over, I mean to go and see her, and carry her some flowers.”

“Jamie is coming to the fête,” said Kitty. “He bought a ticket of Rob.”

The Brightside girls and boys had been briskly

selling tickets, not only up and down Hillside Avenue, but to their schoolmates from all over Edgeton. There had been much discussion in the Club about the price of these tickets. As the price for adults was raised to five cents, some thought that three cents should be asked for children. Amy asked her mother's advice, who said, —

“I should admit the children for one cent, as you have before, Amy. The fact is, they are sure to spend every penny they have,” —

“Yes, of course they will,” assented Amy.

“And they might as well have the pleasure of spending their money inside where they can get something for it.”

While the girls were still admiring the contents of Marie's box, the bell rang again loudly. Ronald and Jack were found on the porch, ready to jump through the screen door with impatience before Amy could open it.

“Oh, Amy!” they burst out together, “the Washington box has come!”

“Oh, has it?” cried all the girls in concert.

“Yes, and it's a great big wooden box, full of things, and mother wants you to come right down and see them.”

The girls needed no urging. Seizing their hats, they sped down the avenue, their hair flying on the wind, Ronald and Jack keeping up in spite of their shorter legs, while some of the other children, seeing the excitement, joined in the race, crying, —

“What is it, Kitty? Do tell us, Amy.”

“A big box from Washington, full of things for the fête!” cried the girls, as they sped on to Cousin Elizabeth's.

The contents of this box could not be enough admired by the girls. But some of the articles seemed so very expensive as almost to dismay them.

"Cousin Elizabeth says that embroidered table centre ought not to be sold for less than three dollars. And those painted fans are cheap at a dollar, she says. They are lovely, but I am afraid we never can sell them," said Amy, after she had returned home. "I don't see who is going to buy all the things, anyway."

"The mothers, of course," said Kitty.

"The poor mothers!" said Mrs. Strong. "First, they are expected to contribute most of the things, and then to buy them all."

"Ah, but, mamma," said Amy, "you know it is to help the little poor children."

"Yes, I know. I think you will find that the mothers will do their part nobly to the last."

"What if it should rain to-morrow?" said Irene.

"Irene! don't mention such a terrible idea!" said Amy.

"Oh, girls, I forgot to tell you. Papa brought home three pounds of candy last night for the fête," said Kitty.

"How nice!" said Amy. "We are sure to make a great deal of money to-morrow, I know, if it does n't rain."

She peeped out the window the last thing before getting into bed that night, and announced, —

"Every star is twinkling bright. I am sure it is going to be pleasant to-morrow."

CHAPTER V.

THE LAWN FÊTE.

EARLY on the morning of the important Saturday, at least twenty pair of bright young eyes popped open with one thought, — “I wonder if it is a pleasant day,” — and twenty glad hearts bounded joyfully when these eyes beheld the most glorious of June mornings, the sun pouring a flood of golden radiance through the elm boughs, the birds singing songs of congratulation to the children, apparently, and the air sweet with summer odors. A very warm day was indicated, but Cincinnatians are not alarmed at a little hot weather, being well seasoned to it.

Hardly was breakfast over, when Hillside Avenue was alive with children running to and fro from Dr. Trimble’s in active preparations for the fête, which was to begin promptly at two o’clock. Mr. Green, who, of all great doings on Hillside Avenue, could truthfully say with Æneas, “All of it I saw, — part of it I was,” travelled back and forth with loaded wheelbarrow, or carrying tables, baskets, seats, and screens, freely giving his labors to the good cause.

The boys were active and really useful, for once, climbing trees as nimbly as monkeys to hang up flags and other decorations, and running errands hither and thither, being much ordered about by the girls, who were arranging and decorating their tables.

Mrs. Trimble sent her colored man, William, and her colored maid, Elnora, out to help, a service willingly rendered, they and Mr. Green lightening their labors by plenty of chat and jokes among themselves. By noon, Dr. Trimble's place was transformed into such a fairy-land that when he came home, he declared, "I don't know where I am."

Flags fluttered from the trees; long strings of Japanese lanterns swung from tree to tree, quivering in every breeze; white tents gleamed against the dark Norway spruces; and scattered everywhere, up hill and down, were tables covered with snowy cloths, and gayly decorated with pink and blue cheese cloth, bright colored paper cut in fancy designs, green branches, and garlands of flowers.

"Isn't it perfectly beautiful?" exclaimed Amy, as she and the others stood at the top of the hill to look at the results of their morning's labors.

"It looks even prettier than I imagined it would," said Laura. "This is going to be our greatest fête yet, I am sure."

"I wonder how much money we shall make?" said Kitty.

"How much did you make last year?" asked Irene.

"Over twenty-nine dollars," said Amy, "but I know we shall make more this year. Oh, girls, wouldn't it be splendid if we could make forty dollars?"

"Perhaps we can, if we sell all the Washington things," said Kitty.

"Pooh! what are you girls talking about?" said Max Goldschmidt. "We boys expect to make five or six dollars ourselves, just off of the lemonade."

"Wait till you hear me holler 'lemonade!'" said Rob. "I guess the folks will all want lemonade when they hear me holler."

"Don't you be too smart, Rob Clover," said Max, "or you'll spoil trade."

"Wait till they see Ben dressed up like a cook," said Paul Williams. "They'll all want ice-cream then."

"I guess they're sure to want ice-cream, anyway, this hot day," said Ben, fanning himself with his hat. He had been working hard, putting up his tent, and bringing little tables and chairs, which were set invitingly around the tent, in the cool shade of a Norway spruce.

"We ought to hurry home now and dress," said Laura. "We might be late."

The mere idea of such a thing hurried the children home, where luncheons were quickly swallowed, that they might hasten back.

If Dr. Trimble's lawn suggested fairy-land in the morning, still more did it in the afternoon, when to all its other bright decorations was added a swarm of little girls in white dresses and gay sashes, fluttering all over it. The boys were not so ornamental, perhaps, but they certainly added a great deal of life to the scene and some noise, as they dashed about, up hill and down, to the injury of Dr. Trimble's hillside. They were so numerous that their pennies and nickels swelled the receipts greatly, especially at the ice-cream, lemonade, and candy tables.

The boys, by joining together all their own pieces of rope, and borrowing the Bruce and Clover clothes-

lines, had enclosed the two sides of the grounds on Grand and Hillside Avenues. The entrance was left at the drive-way, where sat Paul Williams and Tom Barr taking admission fees and tickets.

Near the entrance stood the fancy table of Claribel and the other little girls. It was delightful to see their importance over "our table." Mrs. Herndon sat with them, and aided them in the emergencies of making change. The little girls felt that they could have dispensed with the help of Dixon, who hovered around, making philosophical explanations, and pointing out the defects of certain articles to customers in a way that the girls felt was calculated to injure trade. They had many nice and pretty things, their choicest treasures being two small oil sketches painted for them by Mrs. Frazier.

Amy, who had become quite reconciled to the rival table, admired all their things, and bought an irresistible doll made of cotton yarn by Mrs. Herndon. She told Kitty,—

"There's one good thing. Their table will keep Dixon from bothering us. He always asks so many questions."

The glory of Dr. Trimble's place was two grand old beeches. Their mottled bark, wide-spreading branches, hollow trunks, and gnarled "antique roots" made one think of the Forest of Arden. Under the picturesque beech that clung to the brow of the hill was the candy table, in the charge of Dorothy and Frida, who, like all the girls, wore jaunty white caps trimmed with knots of ribbon to match their sashes. Their white dresses stood out with crisp freshness, and their eyes shone with happiness and excitement.

The home-made candy, made by the deft hands of Mrs. Paxton, Maude Clover, Josie Bruce, and others who "had the knack," was delicious, and the little girls, doing as they would be done by, served their patrons generously, as the patrons were not long in finding out.

"That candy is twice as good as store candy," Van Gooding confided to Fred Woodard, "and they give you twice as much for your money, too."

Liberal patronage followed, not only from Fred, but all the other girls and boys, and the candy table was swept bare long before night, Dorothy and Frida saying, mournfully, —

"Isn't it too bad? We could have sold twice as much if we had only had it."

On the brow of the hill stood Ben's ice-cream tent. Ben's cook's costume made him greatly admired by the children, and, indeed, the white cap and apron were really becoming to his fresh, boyish face, as he stood in his tent serving the ice-cream which Janet Frazier and May Morgan, two deft and dainty little waitresses, passed to the customers. Behind the tent Elnora washed the dishes.

Ben was a large-hearted, generous boy, and he gauged everybody's capacity for ice-cream by his own. He charged ten cents a saucer for grown people, and five for children; but this difference was only in price, not at all in the portions which Ben served with lavish hand. Mrs. Strong and Mrs. Clover, calling for ice-cream, were dismayed at the pyramids heaping their saucers.

"Ben, your ice-cream will not last until evening if you give so much," said Mrs. Clover.

"You know you want some left for the fathers when they come home," said Mrs. Strong.

The ladies showed Ben the quantity usually given by ice-cream dealers, but Ben found it difficult to keep himself down to that.

"It looks so mean and little," he said to May and Janet, who fully agreed with him.

Near the ice-cream tent stood the cake table, because, as Laura sagely remarked, —

"When the people order ice-cream, if they see my nice cake close by, it will make them want some to eat with their cream."

On each delicious loaf of frosted cake gracing Laura's inviting table, lay a beautiful tea rosebud, the happy thought of Mrs. Dawson, and roses and ferns also decorated the table. Laura sold her cake at the same considerately low rates that marked the price of the candy and ice-cream, and happy boys were running all about with thick wedges of cake in their hands. It certainly was a great day for the boys.

From the upper beech-tree there was a steep, grassy slope down into a green hollow, where stood another grand old beech, whose long branches drooped over Amy and Kitty as they stood behind their wonderful fancy-table. Japanese screens made a little room behind the table, where a rug was spread, and chairs placed. But the chairs were quite useless, except for some of the mothers to rest on now and then, for sitting down was the last thing Amy and Kitty thought of. Trade was far too brisk, and the little girls much too excited. It made a pretty picture, — the old beech-tree, the bright table with its many

colors, the two little girls, one so dark and one so fair, their eyes shining and cheeks glowing with happy excitement.

A crowd of children gathered around as soon as the fancy table was ready for business, and there was such a rush of customers that the girls were quite distracted trying to answer twenty questions and wait on twenty small customers at one and the same time.

"How much are these hatchets, Amy?" "Please give me a bundle of those clothes-pins, Kitty." "Do see those cunning owls! How much are they, Amy?" "Please wait on me next, Kitty." "How much are your dolls?" "Here, give me one of those whistles, quick, will you?" "Have you got anything to sell for a cent?" "Dick Woodard, please put that fan right down. You'll break it, using it that way." "Dixon, you mustn't meddle." "Oh, Kitty, can you change a quarter?" "Oh, Van, you must pay for that whip." "Wait a minute, May. I'll wait on you as soon as I can." So on, and so on, waged the flood of commerce around the fancy-table.

In solitary grandeur in the middle of the table reposed the embroidered centre-piece from Washington, surrounded by fans. The fans were going off slowly; the centre-piece was much admired, but no one bought it.

"I knew we never could sell that centre-piece," said Kitty, when a temporary lull in trade gave her and Amy a moment's breathing spell.

"It's so costly," said Amy. "Perhaps we shall have to mark it down. But only look at the money in this box! I believe there is five dollars! Isn't it splendid?"

"I'm so glad," said Kitty. "But, oh, Amy, do see Mr. Klaus! He is pacing up and down in front of our fête as if it were a fashionable reception."

Mr. Klaus was the private watchman who was supposed to walk Hillside Avenue during the watches of the night, and guard its houses and sleeping inmates, although there were well-founded suspicions that he indulged in more naps in porch chairs than his position warranted. However, here he was to-day in full policeman's uniform, armed with his club, pacing up and down the pavement in front of Dr. Trimble's grounds, imparting grandeur to the occasion, and a terror to evil-doers in the shape of a few rough boys, who hung about the rope, on the chance of slipping under without paying. Near the fancy table stood the fruit and flower table, where Irene, looking in her white cap like a fair flower herself, presided over heaps of roses, lilies, etc., and fruit of various sorts. She drove an immense trade in bananas with the boys, and many older people bought flowers of the little girl, so ladylike, so pleased to be patronized. Captain Brownell honored the fête with his presence a short time, from love of his little daughter, and was, of course, a liberal patron of the flower table.

Not far from the flower table was the lemonade well. Max, Rob, and Dick Woodard had shown real ingenuity in its construction. At the foot of the hill, under an overhanging clump of bushes, they had built a well of stones, leaving a cavity in the middle, where stood, deep down, a large tin pail full of lemonade. The heap of stones was so skilfully covered with ivy vines that the effect was rural and pretty, like a natural spring.

The boys sold their lemonade at three cents a glass; big glassfuls, too, more than any one but a boy could drink. They had a large patronage; but unsleeping vigilance was necessary, as Van and some of the other boys thought it a good joke to make raids down the hill upon the well in unguarded moments, trying to steal drinks, not so much for the lemonade as for the fun of trying to outwit Max and Dick.

If trade slackened, Rob stimulated it by shouting,—
“Lemonade! Here’s your ice-cold lemonade, fresh from the spring! Only three cents a glass!”

People half a mile away must have been aware that lemonade was for sale on Dr. Trimble’s premises that day, unless they were deaf.

The popcorn boys, Ronald and Jack, added to the life and picturesqueness of the occasion, in their black velvet suits, with red silk sashes tied at the side, knots of red ribbon at their throats, and dashing black beaver hats, whose broad brims were fastened back in front with nodding plumes. They ran up and down the hill, and through the thickest of the crowd, crying, —

“Pop-corn! Pop-corn! Five cents a paper! Here’s your fine pop-corn!” and Cousin Elizabeth’s daintily painted boxes were fast disappearing.

Two ornaments to the fête were little Phyllis and her great friend, Viola Dawson, who rambled about together with their dolls in their arms, looking in their sweet innocence like two woodland fairies who had wandered in among mortals by mistake.

On the lawn, on benches and chairs that had been grouped here and there in the grassy hollow under the shade of the trees, sat the mothers, chatting with

each other, and happy in the happiness of their children. Said Mrs. Bruce to Mrs. Neale, —

“If this fête is the cause of as much happiness at the other end of the line as here, it will certainly be an unqualified success.”

“Yes,” said Cousin Elizabeth, “I was just thinking that I hoped the poor children would have as much pleasure from the proceeds as our children have had in earning them.”

The children's lawn fête made a pleasant social reunion for the whole avenue, bringing together neighbors who, in this busy era of a busy world, might not have met for weeks. But its patrons were by no means confined to the avenue. Many of the schoolmates from upper Edgeton, who intended giving a lawn fête themselves for the Fresh Air Society on a large scale, later in the summer, came down to enjoy the festivity on Hillside Avenue, and freely lavished their nickels in the good cause. Marguerite and Theodore came over from Oak Grove, and had a happy time, but were obliged to leave early, because Nurse Winnie, who chaperoned them, became alarmed at some dark clouds rolling up the south-eastern sky, and hurried them away.

Dr. Taylor, who was president of the Fresh Air Society, dropped in during the afternoon, which the children felt a great honor. With him came Mrs. Taylor, Bryant, and Stanley. Mrs. Taylor chatted with every one in her pleasant, cordial way, interrupted now and then by the dashing up of her eager boys for more money. Bryant cheerfully helped Rob call “lemonade,” and took a lively part in the activities going on around the well.

Elliot had been one of the fête's best patrons, appearing early in the day, with his purse well filled by his mother and Grandma Gaylord, in aid of so good a cause. Late in the afternoon he came and sat down behind the fancy table, looking so pale and sober that Amy and Kitty both asked, —

“What is the matter, Elliot?”

“I don't feel very well,” said Elliot. “Here's some candy you can have; I don't want any more,” and he passed over a sticky bag of caramels.

“You haven't bought a thing at our table yet,” said Kitty. “I think you might.”

“I'm going to now. I want one of those hatchets, and a pair of those owls.”

“Don't you want this trumpet, Elliot?” asked Amy. “It's only ten cents.”

“And a whip?” added Kitty. “See, it has a whistle in the handle. And one of these penwipers for eight cents?”

“Yes, I'll take them all,” said Elliot, drawing out his purse.

“Oh, Elliot,” said Amy, encouraged by these successes, “don't you want to buy this lovely table centre? It would make such a beautiful Christmas present for your mother.”

“Oh, yes, Elliot,” said Kitty, “do buy the table centre!”

“I don't see the use of such things as that,” said Elliot, flatly refusing to relieve the girls of the table centre. But he bought a fan for a birthday gift to his sister Rose, and then went away, saying, —

“I feel better. I guess I can eat another banana now.”

"If he only would have bought that table centre," said Kitty, anxiously re-arranging it, to give it the most attractive look possible.

"What a shame it will be if we have to send it back to Washington!" said Amy.

The children were pleased at the attention their fête attracted from passers-by on Grand Avenue. People driving stopped their carriages and sat looking at the bright, animated picture, and the people in the electric cars dashing by, stretched their necks to look back as long as the cars were in sight. It was funny to see the horses shying at the unexpected sight of white tents and fluttering pennons in Dr. Trimble's hollow, where usually there was only a lawn-tennis net. By and by, a pretty young lady, in a carriage with her baby and nurse, stopped to look smilingly on the lively fête. Then she left the carriage and entered the grounds. Amy and Kitty admired her.

"Isn't she sweet?" said Amy. "And isn't it kind of her, a stranger, to come to our fête?"

"She has bought some ice-cream and sent out to her nurse," said Kitty. "And, oh, Amy, she's coming this way now!"

The stock of five cent articles on their table had run very low. But this noble lady did not seem to mind price; she bought a fan, and an embroidered scarf, and, oh, moment of mingled joy and anxiety, she asked, —

"How much is this pretty table centre?"

"Three dollars. It came from Washington."

"I will take it," said the lady, quietly, as if it were a matter of course.

Amy and Kitty managed to suppress their rapture until the lady had departed. Then they seized each other by the waist, and danced around and around, never minding if they did knock over the screen. Then they ran over to Irene, crying, —

“We’ve sold it! We’ve sold it! Three dollars! Think of that!”

“It was like fairy stories,” said Amy, afterwards, “where the lovely princess comes in disguise, and relieves the sufferers. Kitty and I were really suffering because we couldn’t sell that embroidery to any one.”

The sun sinking towards the west gilded the beech-trees with its yellow rays, and some of the fathers and big brothers began to drop in on their way home from business, much beset as soon as they showed themselves on the grounds to buy everything, as well as to refill sundry little purses that were drained of every penny. The intention had been to continue the fête into the evening, lighting the Japanese lanterns as soon as the falling dusk gave a reasonable excuse. But the ominous clouds which had alarmed Nurse Winnie had slowly mounted higher and higher as the afternoon waned, little noticed in the general absorption. Now the sky suddenly darkened, a strong wind blew a great cloud of dust up Grand Avenue, there was a threatening growl of thunder, and even some scattering raindrops.

“There’s going to be a hard thunder shower,” cried every one, in dismay.

Then began a dashing and scrambling about, and hurrying to and fro. Boys swarmed up trees, taking down lanterns and decorations; anxious parents

gathered their offspring together and scuttled off home with them, and the children were huddling the wares left into baskets, dress skirts, anything handy, and scudding for home like ships before the gale. Mr. Green and William tore about, carrying loads of screens, draperies, and articles that rain would damage into Dr. Trimble's stable.

Van Gooding and the Barr boys did not lose their presence of mind, but took advantage of the confusion to drag the lemonade pail out of the well, and were hastily passing it from mouth to mouth, when Max, Dick, and Rob spied them, and fell upon them like an army with banners. When this little difficulty was settled, the lemonade pail was empty, and it did not matter much if the boys were caught in the shower.

Amy had been around late in the day, and collected all the money at the different tables into the tin wafer-box which represented the treasury. Nora came running down the hill with umbrellas and waterproofs. Mrs. Strong said, —

“I'll carry your basket for you. Hurry, girls!” and departed hurriedly, none too soon.

Just as the first gust of the shower broke in a tempest, Amy and Kitty raced up the Strong's driveway under one waterproof, Amy tightly clasping to her breast the tin money-box, wherein the nickels and pennies jingled merrily as she ran.

Apparently a malignant fairy, who had not been invited to the fête, had waved her wand over Dr. Trimble's lawn, only half an hour ago so thronged, so gay with decorations, such a bright, animated scene. Now all was dreariness and desolation. Only

a few bare tables and wooden chairs were scattered about on the grass littered with papers, dripping in the rain that drove in white gusts and torrents across the hillside, tossing the great beech branches wildly, and threatening to wholly blow away Ben's tent, as it flapped in the gale. Not a human being was to be seen when, through the darkness, brilliant flashes of lightning gleamed whitely along the avenue.

CHAPTER VI.

HEN-LOGY.

WHEN the severity of the storm had somewhat abated, and Amy and Kitty had recovered breath, the great work of counting the money was eagerly begun.

"Papa, you will have to help us," said Amy; "there is so much, we never can count it ourselves."

Professor Strong willingly came to the little girls' aid. When the bills, the silver dollars, the quarters, tens, nickels and pennies, had all been piled up separately, and counted twice, the amount of each was set down, and Professor Strong proceeded to add the column, the girls anxiously awaiting the result.

"Sixty-five dollars and forty cents!" said the Professor. "Well done, children!"

Amy and Kitty could hardly believe at first that they had really made such an immense sum. They rushed out on the porch, and called across in the rain to Rob and Ben, who were on the Clover's porch.

"What do you think? We've made sixty-five dollars and forty cents! Isn't that perfectly splendid?"

Mr. Green happened to be passing, and heard the great news. Telling Mr. Green anything was the

same as announcing it in the paper, as he circulated up and down among all the families on the avenue, and was always willing to impart any items of general interest. Before the avenue composed itself to rest that night, every child on it knew of the great financial success of the fête.

"If that storm hadn't come," said Kitty, "we should have made ever so much more."

"I don't know," said Amy; "almost all the things were sold. The only large thing left was one of Mrs. Frazier's oil paintings."

Good fortune still attended the children, for the day after the fête, Grandma Gaylord heard about the oil painting, and bought it, thus swelling the receipts to sixty-eight dollars and forty cents. After receiving this unexpected addition, Amy skipped joyfully down the avenue to Cousin Elizabeth's, to tell her of this last stroke of good luck. Cousin George happened to be at home. Looking at Amy's radiant face, he pulled out his pocket-book — that long-suffering pocket-book, which was always bleeding for some good cause — and handed her a two dollar bill, saying, —

"We may as well make it seventy dollars, Amy, seeing it is so near that sum."

"Oh, Cousin George!" exclaimed Amy. "I never knew any one so kind! Thank you so much. Seventy dollars seems so much more than sixty-eight. What a magnificent success our fête is! I can hardly believe we have really made *seventy* dollars."

She went home, feeling as if anything might happen now. Any one she met might thrust a bill into her hand, money might drop down out of the

sky. But the age of wonders had now passed; no more windfalls came in.

The next Sunday the members of the Brightside Club went up early to Sunday-school, and presented Dr. Taylor a box containing the literally weighty sum of seventy dollars and forty cents, it being largely in nickels and pennies. A few days later, there came a long letter, addressed on the outside to Amy, but within to the members of the Brightside Club. It was from Mrs. English, secretary of the Fresh Air Society, and read as follows:—

DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS,—The Fresh Air and Convalescent Aid Society is in receipt of your kind favor; the money is safely stowed away with the treasurer and I am instructed, as the society's scribe, to return warm and hearty thanks for your labors in its behalf.

But it occurs to me that there is so much more to tell and say that I am tempted to wish you were all here with me, and sitting down in such a cheery little group, I might tell you, oh, so very much of what good is done, and how it is all brought about; how we hunt up the poor little sick babies, and thin delicate mothers, and the little fretted, half-starved children of two or three years, who live in the horrible tenement houses, sometimes under the roofs, where it is hot and stifling, or maybe down in some dark, damp, foul-smelling basement; and carry them all away off into the beautiful sweet country where all is peaceful and restful, where they can lie under the apple-trees, have plenty to eat and delicious milk to drink, where fresh breezes blow, and where strength and health comes to them.

Imagine poor little Magdalena who lives with her good grandmother in a half cellar, or lame Johnnie, or dropsical Maggie who always sit still while other children run about and play,—how lovely it is for them, and how happy they

are. All this, and much more that I might tell you, would gladden your hearts and make you never regret that you had worked so hard for this good cause, and made sacrifices to secure so much money.

You will not only have the reward of a good conscience here, but the good angel will record a bright mark against your names in the Book of Life. He who marks the sparrow's fall is surely mindful of golden deeds. What would the Fresh Air Society do without the blessed children and their lawn fêtes? We take particular notice of the Hillside Avenue children's efforts each consecutive year, and that they never forget their less fortunate little sisters and brothers.

I think some day we must gather all the little misses and masters who have worked for the F. A. S. together and have a talk. Some of you remember Hawthorne's "Tanglewood Tales." How I should like to be Eustace Bright, and calling Dandelion, Primrose, Sweet Fern, Periwinkle, Buttercup, Daisy, and the rest of you, have a ramble over Mt. Tusculum or away up on top of Mount Airy, among the poor little ones we are taking care of.

Charity is one of the best traits of humanity, but when we see it manifested in little children it is beautiful indeed, and when we think of the future of lives so early impressed with "love to men," we know the world will be blessed thereby. We trust you will always remember the F. A. S. as the summers slip along, and that you will always be inspired to do good deeds. May God bless you always and keep you, my little friends.

Warmly your friend,

FANNIE S. ENGLISH.

Amy read the letter aloud to a group of children sitting on the Strong's lawn under the big trees. It pleased them greatly. Amy said, —

"Mamma says that a wealthy lady in the city, Mrs. Andrews, has given the use of a farm out in

Tusculum to the Fresh Air Society; it lies up high on the hills, with beautiful views all around, and they have lots of hammocks hung up under the apple-trees. Mr. Ireland, who owns the big dairy, gives them the use of three cows for the summer. It must seem like heaven out there to the poor little children that live in those dirty, bad-smelling alleys in the noisy city."

"My mother says that a child can stay a week out at the Tusculum farm for only three dollars," said Kitty. "Only think of it, how many poor children our seventy dollars will give a week in the country!"

"Twenty-three children and a third," said Ben, who was quick at figures.

The children all laughed at this, but Laura said, —

"A wee, puny, sick baby might be that third, and it might do her more good than any one."

Two of Amy's roosters were seen fighting in the distance.

"If Queen Anne and Lady Rowena are n't fighting again!" exclaimed Amy, running off down hill to separate the combatants. When she came back, throwing herself down on the grass, panting, she said, —

"I have made up my mind to sell some of my roosters."

"Why, Amy," said Kitty, "I thought you would n't part with one of your chickens for anything."

"Mamma and papa want I should," said Amy. "At first, I could not bear to think of it; but lately they are so disagreeable, and make me so much trouble, that I have decided to do it. Queen Anne

and Lady Rowena and Victoria fight every minute, and Rebecca picks at that dear Dorcas boy and Father Dorcas all the time; he even drives them away, and won't let them eat when I throw out corn. But I open the barn door, and the bantams are so tame they follow me in and hop into the corn-barrel and feed themselves. I have to lift them out when they have had enough, for it is impossible to shoo them away. Mr. Green is going to take all the big roosters, except Mr. Chickabod, up to Mr. Esmond's grocery to sell to-night, after I go to bed. I don't want to know anything about it. Mr. Chickabod has to stay because he is king of the chicken kingdom. I think Monday will grow up to be the Prince of Wales."

"You won't have many chickens left," said Elliot.

"Mamma and papa have consented, if I sell the roosters, to let me buy some hens to lay eggs," said Amy. "I want you and Rob and the girls to go up with me to-morrow to the grocery, on the corner of Brooks Street, to help select some hens. I saw some beautiful ones there yesterday, and I felt so sorry for them, cramped into that little coop."

Elliot, and indeed all the children, were only too pleased to aid Amy in this important transaction, and the next day they might have been seen coming down from the grocery, the boys each bringing a fat gray hen of the Plymouth Rock breed, which Elliot had recommended as sure to be great layers, while Amy tenderly carried a large white hen, so gentle and pretty as already to be the especial favorite of her new mistress. All the little children who happened to be out on the avenue, joined this hen pro-

cession, full of interest in this addition to Amy's family.

"Have you decided what to call them, Amy?" asked Irene.

"Yes; I am going to name them for distinguished characters. That gray hen Rob has is Adelina Patti, Elliot's is Mrs. John Drew, and this beauty is Jenny Lind. I thought of naming one after Gladys, but mamma said she feared Gladys would not appreciate the honor."

Patti, Mrs Drew, and Jenny Lind, were duly installed on the "L'Avenue de l'Opera," as Amy now called Palace Court, and seemed to enjoy the agreeable change from the crowded coop to the freedom of the Strong's acre. The very next day Amy ran into the house in triumph, to announce, —

"Jenny Lind has laid an egg! Did n't I tell you, mamma, it was very profitable to keep hens?"

"It's funny Ronald and Jack haven't been over to see my new hens yet," said Amy, soon after. "I must go down and get them and Phyllis to come up."

Amy found Ronald and Phyllis sitting on the front steps looking rather sober.

"Where's Jack?" asked Amy.

"Why, he's sick," said Ronald. "Did n't you know it? He's sick in bed."

Amy was very sorry to hear that merry, roguish, little cousin Jack was so ill, and took Ronald and Phyllis home with her to play, after they should have sufficiently admired the eminent ladies who had come to reside on L'Avenue de l'Opera.

A few days before Jack's illness, he went down

town with his father to buy a small "Safety" for Ronald's birthday gift. After buying the bicycle, Mr. Neale, to compensate Jack for not having one also, offered to treat him to ice-cream.

"No, papa," said Jack, "you have just paid so much for that 'Safety,' you can't afford to spend any more money now," and he persisted in his refusal.

When Mr. Neale told Cousin Elizabeth about Jack's thoughtfulness, she said, —

"Dear boy! I must make it up to him somehow."

The next morning, when Jack was going to school, she said, —

"Jack, dear, here's five cents to get some soda-water at recess."

Jack laughed as he took the money, and ran off with a look of mystery that puzzled his mother, but was fully explained when he came home at noon, to joyfully present her with a red breast-pin of some unknown material, which he had bought for her at Mrs. Blau's store.

"Isn't it pretty, mamma?" he said. "And it's so big, too, for only five cents."

The red breast-pin had held a place of honor on Mrs. Neale's pin-cushion ever since. But now, as Jack, burning with fever, tossed restlessly on the hot bed, thirst made him ready to repent his generosity, mocking him with all his lost opportunities.

"Oh, dear," he said, "I wish now I had taken that ice-cream papa offered me the other day! And I wish I had drank more lemonade at the fête, and eaten more ice-cream! And I wish I had spent my five cents for soda-water, too. You never wear that pretty pin I gave you, mamma."

His mother looked at the little fellow, so small in the big bed, whose face was flushed, whose voice was weak and peevish, and said, —

“I’ll go and put it right on now, Jack dear.”

Tears filled her eyes as she put on the funny red pin. If Jack should die, how pathetic that pin would seem, what a sacredness would at once invest this memento of her little boy’s generous, loving spirit!

Amy amused Ronald and Phyllis in various ways. She always had plenty of entertaining plans, and could easily invent new games, when they wearied of the old. After they had run and played until they were tired and warm, Amy said, —

“Now come and sit in the hammock, and I will draw some picture stories for you.”

The hammock was swung in the cool shade, from the catalpa, that the children climbed so much, to a big maple. The catalpa blossoms dropped down on the children’s heads like a summer snow, while a gentle breeze cooled their heated faces, and wafted sweet odors of lilies and mignonette from the flower-beds. Ronald sat on one side of Amy, Phyllis the other, all absorbed in her drawings. First she drew some beautiful ladies, fantastically dressed.

“These are some of the leading princesses in Our Land,” she explained. “Laura and I are well acquainted with them. This is Princess Leonora of the Beautiful Eyes; this is Princess Quabash, the Eccentric, — you see how wildly her hair flies about, and how strange her head-dress is; this is Princess Reyné, the Fair, and this is Princess Mauvette, the Fashion Queen.”

Phyllis admired the charming ladies, and said, —
 “Please draw some more, Amy.”

But Ronald said, —

“I don’t care very much for those pictures.”

“I will draw something you will both like, I guess,” said Amy. “This will be the exciting history of an Apple Pie.”

The adventures of the Apple Pie were truly thrilling, and amused the children greatly. Each scene was illustrated, and the story ran thus, —

“A was an Apple Pie. B bit it, C cut it, D danced on it, E eyed it, F fanned it, G got it, H had it, I imagined it, J jumped on it, K kicked it, L licked it, M made it, N nailed it, O opened it, P pricked it, Q quirked it, R ran over it, S smiled on it, T tickled it, U *un*-tickled it, V vied for it, W whistled to it, X ’xamined it, Y yelled at it, Z zigzagged it.”

The fun lay in the illustrations. The Apple Pie was always represented with an expressive face. His look of agony when C cut him, or N was seen driving a nail into his cheek, or P, a knight in full armor, bearing down on horseback, ran a spear through him, his dismay when K, a bad boy, with a wicked grin, gave him a flying kick, or L, a dog, licked his face, was only equalled by his bashful air when E, a haughty lady, eyed him through her eye-glasses, or his silly expression when F and S, two pretty girls, fanned and smiled upon him. I, imagining the pie, seemed dissolved in a dream of bliss, whilst X, a doctor in a tall hat, examined the poor pie, sick in bed, and wearing a most doleful look.

The children watched with unabated interest as Amy drew on, to see what was coming next, and

peals of laughter came so often from the hammock, that Lulu and Oscar Stevens and Claribel came running over to see what was going on. When Z, a tiny baby girl, had naughtily dragged the sorrowful pie off, zig-zagging it as she ran, Amy said, —

“Now I’ll write an illustrated poem,” and soon scratched off this, —

“ A pig
With a wig
Danced a hop-over jig,
And said,
‘For a prize, I would
Wish for a fig;
But to dance in this
Rig,
A sensible pig
Would never, would never,
Would ne’er
Dance a jig.’ ”

This nonsense was illustrated by a comical picture of a pig in a ballet-dancer’s skirts, with a much-curled and befrizzled wig on his head, stepping gaily out on his hind-legs.

The children were delighted with the funny pig, and begged for more pictures. But the little audience, which had been increasing, pressed too closely around the artist to be comfortable, so Amy said, —

“No, we will make some crowns out of the catalpa blossoms now.”

They sat in a circle on the grass under the trees, and strung the blossoms on spears of grass, tying them together for crowns. Phyllis ran home without her hat, to show her mother the pretty white wreath crowning her dark curls.

Elliot Carman now came along, and joined the circle on the grass.

"I know two things that you don't, Amy," he said.

Amy would not please Elliot by teasing to know his great secrets, but Kitty could not resist saying, —

"Now, Elliot, what are they? I think you might tell us."

"Our Sunday-school is going to have a picnic next week at the Zoo. Bryant Taylor told me."

"I'm glad," said Amy.

"So am I," said Kitty. "I always enjoy the Zoo, no matter how often I go."

"There's something to do there," said Rob. "But what's your other great piece of news, Elliot?"

"This is a great piece of news, and I guess you will think so. I'm going to Alaska this summer."

"Alaska!" said Amy. "Are you, really?"

"Yes," said Elliot. "Mother has decided to go on a Raymond excursion to California and Alaska, and take Rose and me with her. We start next week Tuesday, so I shall lose the picnic. But I don't care; maybe I shall see a real wild polar bear up there. And I shall catch up with your collection, Amy, for I shall keep my eyes open for curiosities all the time."

The children felt almost like envying Elliot; but they soon recovered themselves, and Amy said, —

"I wouldn't give up going to my island for anything, not even for Alaska. I can hardly wait for the time to come."

"Bet you we'll have as much fun up at my grandmother's as any one," said Rob.

"I hope you will get lots of curiosities, Elliot," said Amy, "because I shall like to see them. You haven't seen the fine brachiopod I got the other day over in Oak Grove, have you? It is the best one I ever saw."

"Where did you find it?" asked Elliot, all interest at once.

"Mamma and I were coming home from the city in the summer cars, by way of Eden Park. You know where they are digging that hill away?"

"Just below the power-house?"

"Yes. When we came into that cut, an Irishman, who was digging, handed up this brachiopod, which had just fallen out of the hill, to our driver, saying, 'I'll give that to you.' We were on the seat behind the driver. I wanted to see it so much that mamma asked the driver to let us look at it. He said, 'You can keep it if you want to; I don't want it.' Mamma had bought me some caramels in town, so I slipped the bag over into his seat. I thought perhaps he might have some little girls at home. He didn't say 'thank you,' or anything, but he looked pleased. I was glad enough to give up my caramels for the brachiopod."

"I should say so," said Elliot. "I'm going over to that cut this afternoon, and see if I can find any more."

"Come, Amy," said Kitty, "let's go into the house and practise our song."

A song called "Comrades" was very popular. The girls had altered its words, to make them apply to girls. "Curling each other's curls" was felt by the authoresses to be a real stroke of genius. They had

also managed to pick out an accompaniment for the song.

Soon from the parlor's open windows came the music of the piano, and two sweet childish voices, singing with spirit, —

“ We from childhood played together, my dear comrade, she and I;
We would fight each other's battles, to each other's aid we 'd fly;
And in girlish scrapes and troubles, you would find us everywhere;
Where one went, the other followed, naught could part us, for we
were

Chorus :

“ Comrades, comrades, ever since we were girls,
Sharing each other's sorrows, curling each other's curls;
Comrades when girlhood was dawning, faithful whate'er might
betide;
When danger threatened, my darling old comrade was there by my
side.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL PICNIC.

JACK'S illness proved to be typhoid fever. Although he was apparently not very ill, his parents were extremely anxious lest the disease take an unfavorable turn, and watched him carefully. As Jack was fond of flowers, Amy kept his sick-room bright with bouquets. And one day Rob Clover, all of his own accord, sent in a beautiful box of flowers to Jack, which Mrs. Neale thought a pleasant thing, coming from one little boy to another.

One day Amy gave Phyllis a lovely cream-tinted tea-rose bud. The time for roses being past, little Phyllis was delighted with the pretty bud, but finally decided, after something of a mental struggle, to give it to her sick brother. Annette, the maid, happening to come into the room soon after, Jack, always generous, and feeling that Annette had been very kind to him, said, —

“Annette, you may have this rosebud.”

“Oh, Jack,” said Phyllis, almost ready to cry, “I believe I didn't *give* you that bud; I only lent it to you!”

Here was trouble that only mamma could settle.

The morning of the picnic, the Hillside Avenue delegation, each child bearing a luncheon basket,

marched up in solid phalanx to Dr. Taylor's, the appointed meeting-place for the Sunday-school. When the yard was overrun with children, Dr. Taylor and the teachers collected them all with some difficulty into two cable cars. From these, they were transferred to a car which was propelled by a dummy engine the remaining distance to the Zoo.

The car looked like a swarm of bees, covered as it was all over with children. The girls, in their fresh summer gowns, sat, quite properly, inside, but the boys hung on the edges, climbed around everywhere, and tried experiments with the brake, until the dummy engineer was almost desperate.

"If we reach the Zoo without killing two or three boys we shall do well," said Mrs. Strong, anxiously regarding the boys' antics.

"I agree with you," said Mrs. Hilton. "As fast as we suppress them in one spot, they break out in another."

At last they reached what Cincinnati children regard as almost a gateway to Paradise, — the entrance to the Zoölogical Garden.

"Now, remember, boys," said Dr. Taylor, as the boys were passing through the turnstile, "we are to meet at the restaurant for dinner promptly at twelve."

"Yes, sir, we won't forget that," said the boys.

Once inside, whoop and away they went up the hill, like a herd of colts turned into a pasture. The girls sauntered along more quietly, in little friendly groups and clusters.

It was a bright summer day, warm, of course, but very pleasant at the Zoo, which lies up on high hills,

shaded by many large old trees, the surface varied by deep, cool ravines, where little brooks trickle along, spanned by rustic bridges. There is usually a breeze at the Zoo, and from its height on every side one catches glimpses of rolling hills and charming homes.

The girls came first to the buffalo herd, in a sloping side-hill yard of almost an acre. Some fine deer were in an equally large yard adjoining. In the ample space of the Zoo, the animals seem so well and at home, as hardly to realize that they are prisoners.

"Only see this pretty deer, how gentle she is!" said Amy, patting the brown nose which the deer thrust through the fence in a most friendly manner.

"Yes, but do hurry up and get to the monkey-house," said Kitty and Frida.

Even the charms of a little buffalo calf could not long detain the girls from the powerful fascinations of the monkey-house. Here they found most of the boys collected, some on the inside, but more on the outside, around the iron cage where the "blue baboon," as the boys called him, was taking the air, and disporting himself as if appreciating the admiration of his large group of spectators.

"Give him something to eat, Rob," said Tom Wallace, whose big sister had prudently kept the family luncheon basket in her own hands.

Rob passed a bit of bread and butter through the wires to the big baboon, who sat winking his eyes and eying him wisely. He seized the bread, smelt it, then threw it down contemptuously, extending his paw for something better.

The boys shouted with laughter, and Ben Bruce said, —

“A wise old fellow. He knows what he likes.”

“If you won’t eat bread, try cake,” said Rob.

The baboon took the cake, swung himself deftly on a perch high up in the cage, and sat there eating it complacently, “just like a little old man,” said Bryant.

Inside the house, the girls were deeply interested in a monkey family, — a father, mother, and tiny baby monkey.

“She acts like a real mother,” said Amy, as the monkey mother tenderly clasped the little one in her arms, nursing and dandling it.

“How hateful that cross old father is!” said Kitty. “That poor little baby seems so afraid of him.”

There was, indeed, a painful lack of harmony in this charming family. The baby seemed to feel irresistibly attracted to his stern parent; he constantly left his mother, who was squatted on the floor in the front of the cage, and looking longingly up the perch, where his father sat proudly aloft, began to climb up the pole. Then the father made a savage dive at him, and the baby, in terror, fled into his mother’s arms, clasping her tightly around the body, and being tenderly sheltered by her. Occasionally she looked over her shoulder at the old gentleman, as the girls supposed, in fear. They were full of sympathy and indignation.

“The mean old thing,” they said, “to treat that dear little baby so! I believe he wants to kill it.”

After this performance had been repeated several times, the mother monkey, with an air which seemed

to say, "I've had enough of this," dropped the little one and started up the pole.

"Ha! now the old man is going to catch it," said Rob Clover.

He certainly did. For a little while there was what seemed a tempest of monkeys all over the cage, the father monkey squeaking and fleeing, hotly pursued by his wife, who literally "made the fur fly." All the other monkeys in the room chattered wildly, while, in the midst of the whirlwind, the baby clung piteously to the bottom of the pole in the middle of the cage. Finally, when justice had been done, the mother came back, and clasping her child in her arms, sat calmly down in the front of the cage again, now and then glancing significantly over her shoulder at the father, who prudently kept himself very closely in the topmost corner of the cage.

"Now they've settled their affairs," said Amy, "we may as well go on, though we might stay here all day, the monkeys are so interesting."

The aviary next attracted them, where they stayed some time, admiring the pretty finches, the odd hornbills, the noisy green parroquets, the love birds, the golden pheasants, above all, the parrots, — parrots of every shade and hue, and each chattering more noisily than the other.

"How wise they look!" said Kitty.

"They look as if they knew more than they would tell," said Amy. "I wonder what they do think?"

"Oh, girls," said Frida, "see those pretty feathers! How lovely for dolls' hats!"

The girls made haste to secure the bright parrot feathers, which, luckily, had fallen outside the cage.

"I am so glad to get this yellow feather," said Amy; "it is exactly what Violet needs for the new hat Irene made her. But I wouldn't wear a bird's wing or head on my hat for anything."

"Why not?" asked Frida.

"Because every one costs a dear little bird its life. I think it's perfectly barbarous," said Amy, whose gentle heart had been deeply impressed by William C. Gannett's poem, "The Halo," which Mrs. Hilton, her Sunday-school teacher, had read to her girls not long before. This was the poem, which was prefaced by this statement, taken from some paper.

One London dealer in birds received, when the fashion was at its height, a single consignment of thirty-two thousand dead humming-birds; and another received at one time thirty thousand aquatic birds, and three hundred thousand pairs of wings.

This furnished the text for Mr. Gannett's poem:

THE HALO.

Think what a price to pay,
Faces so bright and gay,
Just for a hat!

Flowers unvisited, mornings unsung,
Sea ranges bare of the wings that o'er-swung, —
Bared just for that!

Think of the others, too,
Others and *mothers*, too,
Bright eyes in hat!
Hear you no mother-groan floating in air,
Hear you no little moan, — birdling's despair, —
Somewhere, for that?

A Jolly Good Summer.

Caught 'mid some mother-work,
 Torn by a hunter Turk,
 Just for your hat !
 Plenty of mother-heart yet in the world :
 All the more wings to tear, carefully twirled !
Women want that ?

Oh, but the shame of it,
 Oh, but the blame of it, —
 Price of a hat !
 Just for a jauntiness brightening the street !
 This is your halo, O faces so sweet, —
Death : and for that !

“Let’s go over to the pond now,” said Amy. “I want to show you my favorite crane, that reasons. He really does. Here he comes,—that tall gray one.”

The gray crane stalked awkwardly over to the fence, his small head wabbling at the end of his long neck, his round, glassy eyes not promising much mental power, and causing Kitty to say, —

“He does n’t look as if he knew anything.”

“He does know a great deal,” said Amy.

She threw a hard, dry chunk of bread to him. The crane, after picking at it in vain, took it in his bill, went down to the edge of the pond, and placed the crust in the edge of the water to soak. When sufficiently softened, he ate it easily, and then stalked back to the fence for more.

“You see he thinks and reasons exactly like us,” said Amy.

“I would n’t have believed it if I had n’t seen it,” said Kitty.

“I always get Bridget to save the hard crusts for

me when I am coming to the Zoo," said Amy, "to try them on him."

"I wonder where all the boys have gone to," said Frida.

"Oh, to the pony track, of course," said Kitty. "Let's go there next; I want to ride ever so much myself."

"So do I," said Amy. "But let's stop at the Carnivora house a minute as we go by."

Unusual peace reigned at the Carnivora house. The great striped tiger, one of the largest and handsomest in captivity, lay stretched out in his outer cage, fast asleep in the sun. The ugly hyenas were pacing restlessly to and fro, but the leopards and panthers looked too lazy to stir. So did the big lion and lioness; but, unluckily for their repose, they had two small but lively cubs, who pranced all over their majestic parents, gnawing their ears, biting their paws and tails, running races and turning somersaults on them.

"Do look at the big lion!" said Amy. "He looks proud of them, and so indulgent and amiable, when he could kill them easily with one stroke of his great paw."

"Yes, but they bother him all the same," said Kitty. "See, he is going into the inside cage to get his nap in peace."

True enough, the old lion, quite like some human fathers, went off by himself, leaving his wife to get along with the children alone as best she could.

"I do want to go inside and just see Mr. and Mrs. Rooney," said Frida.

Mr. and Mrs. Rooney were a pair of intelligent

chimpanzees, who, at meal-time, sat in chairs at a little table, Mrs. Rooney with a cap on, and ate with knives, forks, and napkins, from plates and cups, to the admiration of the crowd sure to collect before their cage. Sometimes, in the midst of this elegant repast, Mr. Rooney so far forgot himself as to leap on the table, snatch Mrs. Rooney's cap, and make off with it to the top of the cage; but generally his manners were quite irreproachable.

To-day, to the girls' disappointment, the Rooneys shared the general languor. Mrs. Rooney sat stupidly on her perch, and Mr. Rooney lay on his couch in the corner, and both refused to do anything amusing.

Two beautiful Angora cats were greatly admired by the girls. A sign near their cage said, —

“Angora kittens for sale. Apply at the office.”

“Oh, girls,” said Amy, “let's go and inquire the price! Prince is getting old, and I should love to have an Angora cat.”

“So should I,” said Frida. “I know my papa will buy me one.”

The man at the desk smiled at the eager faces of his would-be customers. But when he said the price of an Angora kitten was fifteen dollars, their countenances fell, and they went soberly away, Amy saying, —

“I shouldn't think any one but princesses could have Angora kittens.”

Passing the boa constrictor's cage, she cast one glance of horror in, then pulled Kitty's dress, saying, —

“Come away, quick!”

When they were out doors again, she said, —

“Did you see that dear little white rabbit nibbling away in the bottom of the snake’s cage? They have put him there for the snake to swallow alive. Isn’t it terrible?”

“I think it is awful,” said Kitty. “Ugh! I can’t bear to think of it. Let’s run down to the pony track and forget it.”

Nearly the whole Sunday-school was found gathered at the pony track, and the man in charge was having all he could do to provide ponies and donkeys fast enough.

“Do see that disagreeable Will Bowing,” said Kitty; “he is nearly killing that poor pony, making it run so this hot day.”

Will Bowing was, as the other boys said, “trying to show off.” He was riding around the track at a gallop, incessantly whipping his pony, and shouting, “Hi, get up!” As he was in full dash, suddenly the pony stopped. But Will did not; he went right on, over the pony’s head, landing on his own head in the dirt. As he rose, dirty and discomfited, the other boys cried, —

“Ha! a great rider you are! Here comes the circus rider!” and so on.

When it was plain that his neck was not broken, Mrs. Strong said, —

“Trust the Zoo ponies to take care of themselves. Long experience with boys has made them wise. Do you want to ride, Amy?”

“I want to, but I am almost afraid to,” said Amy, dismayed by Will’s disaster.

“I’m not afraid,” said Kitty. “Come on, Amy;

let's get those two cunning little ones that have just come in."

"Dem ponies ish all right," said the fat, red-faced German pony-master. "It's dem pad poys dat sthirs dem all up. Dey's tame ash kittens. Shee?" he said, as he put the girls in the saddle, and pulling the ponies along by the reins, with the aid of his whip in the rear, succeeded in starting them off in a gentle trot, which subsided into a slow walk as soon as the ponies were out of the range of his whip.

The teachers sat on the raised seats under the canopy, commanding a pleasant view, not only of the track, but also a vista of gently rolling hills in the lovely country around the Zoo. A breeze blew in under the canopy's shade, and as the teachers sat watching the children's fun, and chatting with each other and Dr. and Mrs. Taylor, they felt that they, too, were having a "jolly good time," even if not riding ponies.

Mrs. Strong kept watch of the dear little figure with the long, rippling golden hair, on the brown pony, as it slowly jogged on beside Kitty, and vanished at the opposite end, where the track disappeared from view on lower ground for a while. She watched to see the little girls appear again, but, although ample time passed for them to come in sight, yet they came not. A pang of fear shot through her heart. What if something had happened to the children? That part of the track ran near the outer boundary of the Zoo, with woods below it. Reason said "nonsense" to these fears. But Mrs. Strong was glad to see Rob and Bryant setting off to ride around.

"Boys," she called, "do hurry, and see what has become of Amy and Kitty! I am afraid something has happened to them, they are gone so long."

The boys, nothing loath, whipped up their ponies and made good speed, disappearing behind the curve in their turn. Mrs. Strong watched anxiously.

"There they come at last," she said, her heart giving a bound of relief, as the little cavalcade came into view, girls and boys laughing hard, as at some good joke.

"What was the matter?" she asked, as they rode up before the stand.

"My pony would go out beside the road and eat grass," said Amy, laughing, "and Kitty and I couldn't make him stir, all we could do."

"We both whipped him and whipped him," said Kitty, "but he wouldn't budge an inch. And then my pony saw the other, so he went to eating grass too!"

"Pooh, your whipping wouldn't hurt a fly!" said Rob, smartly. "When Bryrant and I came, they started fast enough; they knew there was no use in fooling then."

Amy said she did n't care for any more pony rides, but asked, —

"May I take the donkey-cart, mamma? I want to give those two little Dunklee girls a ride. I don't believe they have much money for rides, and they are two such nice little girls."

Soon the little Dunklees were the gayest of the gay, crawling around the track behind the little gray donkey, whom experience had taught to economize his steps to the utmost.

"I should n't suppose anything could walk as slow as this donkey," said Amy. "Try whipping him a little, Bessie, just gently, you know, not to hurt him any."

But one might as well have whipped a leather trunk.

"I can't make him feel it, Amy," said Bessie, plying the whip harder, while the donkey crawled on unmoved.

"Well, never mind," said Amy. "See the children on top of Haidee! There's Tom and Ben and Will, and Frida and Claribel and Dixon. How they tip and roll as the elephant stalks along! I'd rather be here than up on his back, would n't you?"

"Indeed, I would," said the happy little girls, in chorus.

"Do you see that black dog following the elephant?" asked Amy. "That is the elephant's friend. He always stays with the elephant, day and night, and if any one offers to harm or insult the elephant, the dog is furious, and flies at him. The elephant plays with him, and they love each other like any other friends."

"One time when I was over here," said Bessie, "I saw the elephant shut a gate. The man made him do it. He knows what the man says as well as any one."

"Elephants are very intelligent," said Amy; "but you would n't think so, to look at Haidee, with her wee little eyes, and great flapping ears."

Mrs. Hilton noticed that a few of the boys had not ridden at all. Mistrusting that lack of funds was the probable reason, Mrs. Hilton went over to them, and said, —

"Boys, we want to see some more riding. We can't ride the ponies ourselves, so we want some one to ride them for us. It is almost equal to the circus to sit up there under the canopy, and see the children go around. We'll pay for the ponies, if you'll ride them for us. Will you?"

"Yes'm, we will," said the boys, with alacrity, thinking Mrs. Hilton the nicest lady they ever knew, as they trotted gaily around the track, three times apiece.

But the riding now began to flag, for the excellent reason that every one's change began to run low, even the mothers' and teachers'. So, when Dr. Taylor announced, "It is time for luncheon," every one was ready to accompany him to the large restaurant building in the centre of the grounds. A very wide porch ran all around this building, pleasantly shaded by vines and overhanging trees. A long table had been set for the picnic on the shady side of this porch, where one looked out across the flower-beds, brilliant with bloom, to the pond, where Amy's crane, and many other aquatic birds were enjoying their little lives.

The children had brought their own luncheon-baskets; but the teachers had taken the precaution to bring extra supplies of cake, fruit, and sandwiches, lest some one run short, and these refreshments were passed again and again, until even the boys were able to gaze upon the most tempting cake unmoved. But every one was found able to eat ice-cream when it came, last of all.

The teachers began to gather up the remnants, which were a despair.

"It really seems like the miracle of the loaves and

fishes over again," said Mrs. Strong; "there actually seems to be more than we brought. It is a shame to waste this nice cake."

"If you will pack all the half loaves and nice pieces in something," said Mrs. Taylor, "I will take them down to the Day Nursery. The children there are not spoiled by too much of the good things of this life, and will be overjoyed with it."

Although their money was exhausted, the children still found plenty of amusement amidst the almost limitless resources of the Zoo. Some of them went from the restaurant down to the alligator pond.

"I think that's my alligator," said Bryant,—"that long one sunning himself on the log. You know he grew so big mother made me give him to the Zoo. Here, sir," said Bryant, throwing a small stick in to attract the attention of his old pet. But alligators are not warm-hearted creatures, and this one seemed wholly to have forgotten his former master, lying as motionless and indifferent as the log itself.

"Come and see the prairie-dogs," said Amy; "they're much more interesting than the alligators, I think."

The cunning little prairie-dogs, dodging into their holes, then bobbing up again in the most unexpected places, were found so pleasing, that the children hung over their fence until the man came to feed the sea-lions near by. After seeing the sea-lions swallow their fish whole, which they felt a striking example of greediness, they went down to the bear-pits.

The bears, oppressed by the heat, were far from lively. The big grizzlies lay stretched out as if

satisfied that life was not worth living, while the polar bears would do nothing but stay in their water-tanks up to their necks. The cinnamon bears, though not so playful as usual, did stand up comically on their hind-legs and beg, when they saw the children looking down upon them, and were rewarded by choice bits from a few luncheon-baskets not even yet exhausted.

Then they visited the zebra, the camels, giraffes, and kangaroos, and the ostriches, who made the children laugh well by their ridiculous appearance. They were running, for some reason best known to themselves, as fast as they could up and down their enclosure, on an awkward trot, their small wings expanded, and great mouths wide open. As one bore down to the fence, with her mouth stretched from "ear to ear," as Rob said, Kitty remarked, —

"Did you ever see anything so ridiculous? They look like idiots."

"But see the lovely ostrich plumes in their tails," said Frida. "I wish one would fly out over the fence, like the parrot's feathers."

"They are like some people," said Amy, "who have fine clothes, and don't know anything."

The sun was low down in the west, when Mrs. Strong found Amy and Kitty gazing admiringly up into a tree at some coons, whose sly faces looked the picture of cunning, as they peeped knowingly down through the branches.

"Oh, girls, here you are at last!" said Mrs. Strong; "I've been looking all around for you. It's quite time we were going home. Dr. Taylor and quite a party have gone down to the dummy already."

"Oh, mamma," said Amy, "we have n't been down that path at all, where all the owls and eagles, and wolves and foxes are. Can't we just run down there a minute?"

"Not to-night; we shall be late enough home as it is. We will come again when your little cousin Nell comes down from Troy. She is sure to enjoy it. Do you know where Rob is, Kitty?"

"I think he has gone down to the dummy. I saw him going that way a little while ago, with Max and Ben."

But at the dummy no boys were to be found.

"They must have gone home on the trip before this," said Mrs. Strong.

When they reached home at half-past six, Mrs. Clover came out to meet them.

"Why, where's Rob?" she asked.

"Has n't he come home?" said Mrs. Strong. "We expected to find him here."

"No, he has n't come yet," said his mother.

As Rob had gone rather under Mrs. Strong's care, she felt as if she had somehow failed in duty, and was considerably anxious over his non-appearance. The delayed dinners were over, the dusk began to fall, and Mrs. Strong and Mrs. Clover were out on the lawn, holding a council of war as to what it was best to do, when, to their relief, the missing boy was seen slowly walking up the avenue.

"Rob," said his mother, "what is the meaning of this? Why did n't you come home with the others?"

"Why, you see, mamma," said Rob, dropping his basket, and sinking into the first lawn-chair, "this

was how it happened. Ben and Max and I started to go down to the dummy. But we thought we would just stop in for one more look at the monkeys; and then we bought some peanuts for the monkeys and ourselves. That took all the money we had saved for car fare, so we had to walk all the way home. It's more 'n a mile from the Zoo, and after running around over there all day, our legs were so tired we couldn't walk fast. That's what made us so late. Is there any dinner left?"

CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMER VACATION.

LIFE on Hillside Avenue in summer was a sort of perpetual picnic. Houses were practically useless, except as convenient places in which to sleep and eat. Every one lived out doors. The ladies sat on the porches, or on the lawns, in the shade of big trees, with books or sewing, and there was much friendly "running over" to neighboring porches and lawns. True, the weather was usually warm, not to say hot, but every one dressed thinly, and kept as cool as possible in mind and body. A great luxury was the abundance of fresh fruit. From the first man who made life a burden roaring "*Straw-berries!*" as he drove along the avenue in early May, to the last man in the fall, who rent the ear with his shout of "*Gur-ra-ips!*" there was always an opportunity to buy choice fruit cheaply.

As for the children, — the happy children, whose schools were all closed for at least two months, — they lived under the trees as naturally as the birds in them, and found the summer days not half long enough for all their important undertakings.

One pleasant but warm morning, Irene came over to Amy's. She found her on the front porch with her drawing-block.

"What queer thing *are* you drawing, Amy Strong?" exclaimed Irene, as she peeped over her friend's shoulder.

"A beauty, such as they describe in stories," said Amy. "See, there are her 'raven locks,' her 'diamond' eyes, her 'cherry' lips, and her 'swan-like' neck."

A black raven, with low, drooping wings, was placed on this beauty's head for hair; two cherries were drawn for her lips; long lines, darting in all directions from her two round eyes, indicated the flashing of diamonds; and the neck was a swan's, — long, thin, and arching.

"Amy! How perfectly hideous!" was Irene's tribute to this effort, at which Amy laughed as hard as she.

The two sat for some time drawing, each imagining a story, which was drawn in scenes, and then displayed to the other. After drawing until tired, Irene said, —

"I wish we could play dolls. But it is so fearfully hot up in the attic this warm weather."

"Oh, Irene," said Amy, "I have thought of such a nice plan. We can bring those bird-houses up in the attic out doors, and make a summer resort for the dolls. They will make splendid hotels."

Put away in the safe harbor of the attic were two quite elaborate bird-houses, each of two stories, with a porch running under the little windows. Irene welcomed Amy's new idea with enthusiasm, and they tugged the heavy bird-houses down from the attic and out doors.

"Where shall I have my hotel?" asked Irene.

"Have yours over in the shrubbery," said Amy, "and I'll have mine here by my flower-bed, where the flowers will hang over it. I'm going to bring out a large pan of water, and sprinkle sand and pebbles on the bottom, and put it close by my hotel for the sea-shore. My hotel is at the sea-shore, you know, and yours might be at the White Mountains."

"Oh, yes," said Irene, "I like that, because my uncle lives near the White Mountains, and I know all about it."

The play went merrily on. Lord and Lady Spirendoff, the majestic Madame Oskavetsky, the Prince of Abyssinia, the peerless Countess Elnora de Goupil, who had long since been forgiven by her noble father, Sir Louis Vanderbuhl, and the rest of the nobility and gentry, were rattled back and forth from the sea-shore to the White Mountains in their little tin carriages, as the state of their health, always delicate, demanded. Once the carriage wheels tangled in the grass and tipped over. This was all the better, as it was a terrible accident, requiring the doctor to be summoned. The doctor, a small Japanese doll, came in such haste from his quarters at the aristocratic Hotel De Lancy, in the White Mountains, that he pitched out headforemost, and was run over by his own carriage. Before breathing his last, however, he was able to ejaculate, —

"Take Lady Spirendoff to the sea-shore. Sea-bathing is the only thing that can save her life."

Lady Spirendoff being a little china doll, it was quite safe to give her sea baths.

"Oh, I have a beautiful idea, Irene," said Amy. "You know my doll, Undine, that Cousin Elizabeth

gave me the summer I went to Marblehead? She has a wooden jointed body, and a blue flannel bathing costume, and an oil-skin cap to protect her hair, and I am going in to get her, and give her a bath!"

"That will be lovely," said Irene. "Her bathing suit will make it seem all the more real."

Of course it was impossible for Amy and Irene to be having all this fun without the other children soon discovering that something interesting was going on among the big girls. Before long, little Claribel, Lily, Eda and Lena Goldschmidt, all came running down the driveway.

"What are you playing, girls? Oh, do see that big doll in the water? What fun! May we play, too, Amy?"

Amy and Irene would have much preferred playing alone. So many meddlesome little fingers picking up the dolls, and wanting to draw the carriages, the busy little tongues full of chatter, asking twenty questions at once, disturbed the quiet play of their imaginations, and broke the spell which made their make-believe seem almost real to them. But neither of them could well do anything rude or unkind, so they did not send the little ones away, but, as people often must in this world, made the best of what they could not help. They were not very sorry when Kitty came running around the corner of the house, all animation.

"Oh, Amy," she said, "Miss Sadie Humphreys wants to take our pictures in your grandmother's old-fashioned clothes. We must hurry and get dressed, for she is all ready for us."

Once, when Amy and Kitty had been allowed the

great privilege of dressing up in some old-time dresses of Mrs. Strong's mother, carefully kept by Mrs. Strong, they had run across the street to display themselves to their friend, Miss Sadie, and she had promised to take their pictures in costume some time, having a kodak, with which she took excellent pictures.

"It's too bad you have to go," said Claribel.

"Is n't it too bad?" said Lily, and Eda, and Lena.

"I will take all my dolls into the house now," said Amy, "except Undine. I'll put her on the bench in the sun to dry, and nobody must touch her. But I'll leave the hotels and the sea-shore here until I come back, and you can bring your own dolls over here and play if you want to."

Irene went in with the girls to give them the benefit of her taste in dressing for this important occasion. Mrs. Strong consented to let them wear the precious garments, if they would be very careful. They felt truly elegant crossing the street, in full array, holding up their trailing robes like real ladies, followed by an admiring train of little girls.

Amy wore her grandmother's wedding dress, a fawn-colored silk quaintly made in the fashion of sixty years ago, and Kitty a plum-colored silk of the same date. Over her light silk Amy wore a black-lace long shawl, and her abundant hair was twisted on top of her head, and fastened with old ornaments. Kitty wore a white-crape long shawl tastefully draped by Irene, and her dark locks were twisted high and fastened with a huge tortoise-shell comb that had been Mrs. Strong's grandmother's.

Miss Sadie laughed almost as much as the girls,

when she saw them radiant in all this finery. But it was long before the pictures were taken, because the girls could not keep their faces straight. Miss Sadie having posed them, and made everything ready, with her hand on the cap said,

“Now keep perfectly still, girls. I’m going to take off the cap. Don’t laugh.”

Whereupon both girls were seized with uncontrollable laughter, until even Miss Sadie had to laugh too, at seeing them.

“I really can’t help it, Miss Sadie,” said Amy. “Kitty does look so funny and grandmotherly in that comb.”

“Amy’s sleeves are so long and wrinkly they make me laugh every time I look at her,” said Kitty with a fresh giggle.

After several attempts, Miss Sadie finally secured a good picture of the quaint little figures. Both faces wore decidedly that “pleasant smile” so much coveted by photographers.

Amy and Kitty ran in to display themselves to Mrs. Clover and Maude, and then, alas, had to put away their costumes, and come down to every-day clothes again. Amy begged to be allowed to run down to show themselves to Cousin Elizabeth, but her mother dared not trust the precious dresses so far from home, running the gauntlet of all the children on the avenue. Amy however found consolation in a new idea that had struck her fertile brain.

“Kitty,” she said, “if you and Irene will help me bring all my big dolls out doors, I will take their photographs.”

“What for?” asked Kitty.

“Why, because I’m going away soon, and of course I ought to have all my children’s pictures to take with me. Besides I want to show all my dolls to Faith, and I can’t take them all with me, even in my new trunk.”

The garden bench was brought up on the kitchen porch, partly to avoid the too great interest of the little girls in Amy’s best dolls, of which she was as tender as any mother of her children. Lord Fauntleroy, Violet, Mary, Undine (quite dry, but slightly wrinkly), the two Dinahs, Sylvia, Constance, Joseph, Austin, and two big Japanese dolls were arranged in a fine group, and sat delightfully still, not even laughing when their pictures were taken. Amy ran down into her dark room in the stable to wash off the plate, and came out, holding it up to the light, saying, —

“Oh girls, see how natural they look! Is n’t their expression beautiful?”

After luncheon, for two or three hours in summer time, Hillside Avenue usually looked deserted. Every blind of every house was shut, no one stirred abroad unless absolutely obliged, and one might have falsely supposed that there were no children on the avenue, so still and lonely did it seem. Wise mothers kept their children quietly in-doors during the hottest part of the day. Amy, fond as she was of her little friends, always enjoyed these quiet hours of rest, for then she could read, write, or draw, giving reins to her imagination uninterrupted.

This afternoon the mercury stood at ninety-five, and the heat was almost unbearably sultry and breathless. Amy sat writing in her own room by her favorite window that looked out into a white birch-tree, which

trembled and quivered all over at the remotest hint of a breeze, comforting the imagination and making one quite cool only to look at it.

"What are you writing, Amy?" asked her mother, as she came up stairs.

"Oh, different things. I wrote an 'S' story first, and then I drew two men for opposite characters, and had one challenge the other."

The first letter was written in such a stern, black hand that Amy's pencil had nearly gone through the paper in making the bold letters. It read,

ROCKDALE, PORTLAND COUNTY.

DEAR SIR, — Kindly oblige me by accepting a challenge for to-morrow evening, inasmuch as we both admire Miss Deardove. Being, of course, the gentleman I suppose you, you will without doubt accept so reasonable a challenge.

Hoping you will oblige me, I am

Respectfully yours,

BENJAMIN BOLDMAN.

The reply, written in a trembling hand almost illegible, read,

TREMBLE HILL, FLYAWAY COUNTY.

DEAR SIR, — I entreat your humble pardon, but am suddenly called away on business. Pray do not think I am afraid.

F. FEARFLY.

"This is Miss Deardove," said Amy. "Is n't she pretty? I think she is one of the prettiest ladies I ever drew."

"Let me hear the 'S' story," said Mrs. Strong, after she had sufficiently admired the too lovely Miss Deardove.

"It is n't quite finished," said Amy.

"Of course not," said her mother.

"Ah now, mamma, you need n't laugh. I had to stop to write up my chicken memorandum, because that is very important, you know."

In a little blank book, labelled on the outside, "Memorandum of my Chickens," Amy kept a record of important events in the chicken world.

This was Amy's "S" story: —

"Silly Sarah, slowly skating, stupidly slipped. She stained Sister Susan's soft silk sash. Sarah soiled sweet Susan's soft silk sash! Shame, Sarah!

"Sarah stole slowly and snailishly towards the seminary.

"See Silly Sarah shambling to school!" shouted some slovenly spectators.

"Such sarcasms shook sensitive Sarah's soul; so, stumbling shamefacedly, she succeeded in securing the school sled. Seated on some straw, she soberly surveyed the shameful sight of Sister Susan's second-best sash, stained, soiled, the side shockingly slit. She said she should shun skating, since she surely did not succeed.

"Sweet Susan sat sewing" —

"I hope you will finish that story, Amy," said her mother. "I am anxious to know how sweet Sister Susan stood the sorrowful sight of her spoiled sash. I am going to lie down now. I may fall asleep, so don't speak to me for a little while."

Amy liked her mother's sympathy in all her doings, and was apt to run to show her the last drawing, or read her the last story, so this caution was not unnecessary. After completing the chicken memoranda,

she resumed work on a continued story she wrote on when the fit seized her, called "The Ups and Downs of the Noble Family." This great work was now in its ninth chapter, called "Calls, Cats and Cookies," and Amy fondly cherished the hope of offering it to Roberts Brothers for publication as a book, should it ever by good luck be completed.

So absorbed was she that she did not notice a rapidly approaching storm, until there came at once a vivid flash of lightning, a heavy peal of thunder, and a sweeping downfall of rain dashing in on her as she sat by the window. She hurriedly closed her windows, while Nora and Bridget ran from attic to first floor shutting doors and windows. Amy was not often afraid in thunder showers, so she resumed her writing. But this proved a storm of unusual severity. Rain mingled with hail beat against the windows in torrents that threatened each moment to break the glass, incessant flashing lightning illuminated the darkness with blinding white light, and finally there came a tremendous clap of thunder that shook the house as it seemed to roll along the roof.

Mrs. Strong's door was opened, and a rather Fearfly-ish voice said, "Mamma, are you awake? May I come in and lie on your bed a little while?"

"Yes, come, dear," said her mother. "This really is a terribly severe storm. There! that flash must have struck quite near us, I am sure."

Amy leaped on the bed and nestled down close to her mother. At that moment, Bridget dashed into the room without the ceremony of knocking, so alarmed was she. She held a bottle of holy water in

her hand, and coming to the bed, sprinkled some over Amy and Mrs. Strong, saying as she did so,

"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost!"

"You need n't be afraid now, Amy," she said, as she left the room; "nothing can hurt you now."

"Thank you, Bridget," said Mrs. Strong.

Amy was much impressed by this dramatic action of Bridget's.

"Do you believe that does any good, mamma?" she asked.

"No, I do not," said Mrs. Strong, "but Bridget does, and she did the best she could for us, so we must take it kindly as Bridget meant it."

When the storm had somewhat abated, Mr. Green, with his big rubber rain-coat that came to his heels and made him look like an elephant, all dripping and shining with wet, dropped into the kitchen to tell Bridget and Nora that the chimney of Mr. Wallace's house on Grand Avenue just below them had been struck by lightning and knocked all to pieces.

"I knew this house would n't be struck," said Bridget, with much satisfaction in her wise precautions. "There's nothing like a little holy water sprinkled around a house."

The shower settled at last into a gentle rain, most grateful, as there had been a long drought. The parched grass began already to turn perceptibly green again, the trees uplifted their dripping branches in a thankfulness you could almost feel, and the porch honey-suckles and revived flower-beds filled the warm, damp air with sweet fragrance.

After dinner, Kitty and Rob came over on Amy's

porch. Poor old Duke wanted to come too, but Amy's cat Prince sat up so straight, glaring at him so fiercely with bushy tail, that he dared not venture, but lingered under the Clover's porte-cochère, looking wistfully over to the land of delights he was not allowed to enter.

"How much dogs do know," said Kitty. "Look at Duke."

Here Duke gave a bark in delighted recognition of his name, and drew nearer, wagging his tail in the most conciliatory manner.

"Yes, and look at Prince too," said Amy. "She knows as well as I do that this is her own house, and that Duke dare not touch her here. She would be afraid to face him anywhere else. Sometimes I think animals know as much as people. Don't you remember Frank Foote, what a cunning, knowing dog he was?"

"I saw a dog do a first-rate thing last Saturday, when I was in the city," said Rob. "A gentleman rode up near the Galt House, with a big mastiff following him. When he went into a building, he put the bridle into the dog's mouth, saying, 'Now be careful, Cæsar.' That dog sat there like a boy, holding the reins tight in his mouth, not taking the least notice of the crowd that gathered around to watch him. Just then that fire broke out in the Galt House. The engines and hose-carts and ladder wagons came galloping up, and there was the biggest kind of a tearing about and excitement right around the dog and horse. The horse was frightened by the engines, and jumped about trying his best to get away. But it was of no use. That dog set his jaws and held on,

and the harder the horse pulled, the more determined he looked. It was as much as ten minutes before his master came out. When he mounted and rode off, the crowd gave a big cheer for the dog."

"He did better than some boys would, I think," said Kitty. "They would have dropped the reins to run to the fire."

"Mrs. Evarts told me such a nice true dog story the other day," said Amy. "Her family owned a Newfoundland dog named Neptune when she was a little girl. At that time, she sometimes walked in her sleep. One night about midnight, she rose sound asleep, walked down stairs, unbolted the door, went out of the yard, and started to walk down the street. Neptune knew something was wrong and followed her, trying in every way to make her go back. He took her nightdress in his mouth and tried to pull her back. Finding that did not stop her, he put himself directly in front of her and pushed against her. In this way he at last succeeded in making her turn back, and finally he brought her safe to her own room. The next morning when she came into the breakfast room, he stood right up and put his paws on her shoulders, he was so glad to see her safe. And after that, he insisted on sleeping every night across the threshold of her bedroom door."

"What a knowing old fellow," said Rob. "What became of him?"

"He died while she was away at boarding-school, supposed to have been poisoned by some chicken thieves. Mrs. Evarts said she felt almost as if one of the family had died, when she heard of it."

Here Duke, who had been standing afar off wag-

ging his tail, seeming to understand that the merits of dogs were being discussed, unable to endure his banishment any longer, made a bold dash up on the Strong's porch. Prince, bristling with rage, flew at him, and would soon have literally "scratched out both his eyes," had not Rob, Amy, and Kitty all rushed to the rescue. Duke fled for home with his tail between his legs, while Amy shut Prince up in the front hall, where she glared and hissed behind the screen door as if she would jump through it, unabashed by Amy's saying severely,

"Prince, I am ashamed of you! You behave disgracefully! No respectable cat would act in that way."

Amy brought her little round table that Philip gave her out on the porch, and the three children played "Messenger Boy" and "Authors," with light refreshments of raspberry vinegar and cookies, happy enough even if the rain did prevent their usual evening sports on the lawn.

"I know one thing," said Rob, as he and Kitty were starting for home. "I'm awful glad tomorrow's the first of July. Begins to seem as if the Fourth would get along after a while. I thought it never would come."

CHAPTER IX.

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH.

JACK was slowly getting better. In fact, he considered himself quite well, but wise Dr. Mellin had fixed July fifth as the date for that reappearance of Jack in the outdoor world, for which he was so impatient.

"Provided," said the doctor, "that the Fourth does not bring on a relapse, in spite of all our care. Keep him as quiet as possible, Mrs. Neale, and on no account let him down stairs."

Against this firm mandate of Dr. Mellin's Jack rebelled and pleaded in vain.

"I can't have any fun," he said, almost crying, "shut up in a bedroom Fourth of July. And it's my birthday, too."

"We'll all fire off our crackers right under your windows, where you can see us, Jack," said Ronald.

"It's no fun to see other folks shoot off crackers," whined Jack.

"Don't worry, dear child," said his mother. "If you are pretty well, I will let you go out on the balcony and fire your crackers. And that will be the very best place of all for mamma and her boy to see papa's fine fireworks in the evening."

"I'd rather be right in it," said Jack, only partly consoled.

Jack had been rewarded for taking medicine manfully by various sums of money from his indulgent father, so that he had accumulated quite a handsome sum during his illness to buy supplies for the Fourth. Jack was anything but a miser. One day, as the Fourth drew near, he called Phyllis to him and said: —

"Here's ten cents for you to buy shooting crackers with, Phyllis. And I wish you'd go and ask Billy Barlow, and Oscar, and Dixon, and Jimmy Posey to come up here a minute."

To each of these friends Jack gave some of the wealth burning in his pocket, and felt all the better prepared to enter on the joys of the Fourth for having shared his fortune with his friends.

The intermittent popping of fire-crackers that had kept up through the month of June, wholly ceased as the Fourth drew near, because every one was saving himself up for a grand outburst on that day. All the fathers came home the evening before the Fourth laden with packages of strange shape and huge size, even to Professor Strong, who considered the noisy celebration of the day a nuisance, but who had relented at the last moment under Amy's pleadings.

Amy saw him coming down the avenue, and ran to meet him, hippity-hopping for joy.

"Oh, goody," she said, "what loads of things you did buy, didn't you, papa? Shall I help you carry them? What's in this great long bundle? And what's this heavy thing?"

"A flower-pot, I believe they call it. And the long bundle has Roman candles, and a few rockets. Great nonsense, the whole of it," said the Professor.

"Ah, papa, you wouldn't want me to go around firing off other people's things, and not have any of my own! All the children are going to have just lots and lots of things. Cousin George has about a wagon load of fire-works, I should think. Ronald took me up in the attic to see them. Mr. Clover has such a big pile. And Captain Brownell has bought ever so many, because he's a naval officer, you know, and of course he *has* to be patriotic, Irene says."

"Well, it will soon be over now," said the Professor.

Irene ran up in the evening to arrange her plans with Amy and Kitty.

"We must get up very early, girls," she said.

"Rob and the other boys mean to be up by four o'clock," said Kitty.

"Then we must too."

It was agreed therefore that the girls should meet at precisely four o'clock the next morning, to properly begin the celebration of the nation's birthday. But Mrs. Strong, when informed of this plan, would not agree to call Amy at that hour, feeling that the day would be quite fatiguing enough for Amy's strength, even if begun at the usual time.

"If you happen to wake yourself, you may get up," she said, "but I shall not call you."

Secretly she felt sure that Amy, always sleepy in the morning, would not waken.

At midnight came from the city the distant sound of a mighty tumult; the ringing of every bell and

the screeching of steam fire-engine, steamboat and factory whistles; a most unearthly din, even as heard from afar in the suburbs, where the popping of crackers and firing of pistols had been carried on intermittently all night. Sunrise was ushered in by the booming of a cannon, or more probably an anvil, on Brooks Street. But Amy slept through all, much to her mother's satisfaction.

But suddenly under Amy's window came a tremendous "bang!" effectually wakening every one in the neighborhood who had managed to sleep any before. It was a cannon cracker, fired by the irrepressible Rob. Amy bounded out of bed. There were Kitty, Rob, and Irene on the Clover's driveway, with piles of crackers, punk, and a lighted candle, hard at work, while poor Duke, not knowing what to make of these fearful noises, stood at a safe distance, barking and howling dismally, not liking the Fourth any better than Professor Strong.

"I'll be down in a minute," called Amy from the window.

"Put on your old blue dress, Amy," called her mother, "and come in here and let me braid your hair."

Ever since Amy had burned about twenty little holes in the front of a new gingham dress one Fourth of July, her mother had insisted on her wearing an old woollen dress. The other girls were similarly dressed, to avoid all danger of catching fire.

All the children were out and busy, and a brisk firing and banging was going on the whole length of the avenue. Every now and then came a rattling salute when some enterprising boy let off a whole

pack of crackers under a tin pan or barrel, while an occasional cannon-cracker split every one's head open; at least Mrs. Kaiser was heard to declare that her head was split open.

After breakfast, everyone decorated. Mrs. Haddon's porch was all aglow with swinging Japanese lanterns. Captain Brownell flung out to the breeze a handsome large banner, worthy the United States Navy. Amy climbed nimbly up the step-ladder, hanging Japanese lanterns across the front of her porch, and sticking little flags all over the honeysuckle vines. Maude, Kitty, and Rob were busy, Rob climbing out the second story window on the porch roof, and, under Maude's directions, succeeding in fastening flags in what seemed impossible places. Ben Bruce planted his big flag on its flag-staff in the centre of his father's lawn. Dixon marched up and down the avenue, a procession of one, waving a small flag, being, in his own mind, an army with banners. No person with the usual number of eyes and ears could have doubted the patriotism of Hillside Avenue that day, all blue with gunpowder smoke and ablaze with the Star-Spangled Banner as it was, from one end to the other.

After a while, Amy took time to run down to Cousin Elizabeth's to "see how poor little Jack was getting along." Poor little Jack seemed to be having the best time of any one. From his vantage point in the balcony he threw down lighted crackers on all sides, that sometimes exploded in the air in the most satisfactory manner. The novelty of having Jack penned up in the balcony throwing his crackers abroad, and the delight of all the experiments he invented

inspired by his new situation, drew around a crowd of small boys, who threw crackers back at Jack, and encouraged him by calling up, —

“I bet you can’t hit me! Let’s see you let off a whole pack at once in the air. You don’t dare hold one in your hand and let it go off, Jack,” and so on.

Cousin Elizabeth, who had experienced Fourth of July before, had early in the morning established a temporary hospital ward in the front hall. On the table ready for instant use were a bundle of linen rags, and bottles of arnica and sweet oil. When any one’s finger was burned, she called the sufferer in, dressed the wound, and did him up on the spot. Absorbed in these surgical duties, and in trying to keep the irrepressible Jack from killing himself or any one else, and Phyllis from setting herself on fire, she did not fully realize the effects of Jack’s patriotism. But the next day, when Annette went out to sweep off the front porch, she came in to report it “a perfect sight,” and so indeed it was. Steps and porch, even the stone walk, were found to be peppered all over with burnt spots from Jack’s rain of fire-crackers.

At noon Amy came in to dress, for she, Irene, Ben, and Paul had been asked by Mr. Clover to accompany Mrs. Clover and his own children to the grand celebration at the House of Refuge, of which institution Mr. Clover had long been a director. When the two carriages drove up to the Clover’s door, it would have been hard to recognize in the boys, all shining with cleanliness and their best clothes, and the girls so sweet and dainty in their white dresses and leg-horn hats, the smoke-begrimed children who, an hour

before, had been shooting crackers in their oldest garments.

The House of Refuge is one among many wise and beautiful charities in the city of Cincinnati. It is a reformatory where are sent children guilty of small crimes, children whose parents or guardians cannot control them, and unfortunate children, either orphans or those neglected or abandoned by their parents. Here they are cared for, trained in right ways, taught trades, helped to make useful men and women, and good homes are found for them. The Refuge is supported by the city. Its directors have always been from among the prominent citizens, gentlemen who freely give much time and thought to the work solely in a spirit of humanity, from a genuine love of children and desire to help them. During the forty-three years since its establishment, between eight and nine thousand children have been its inmates, of whom over eighty per cent are known to have been permanently benefited.

Kitty and Rob always felt a trip to the House of Refuge a great privilege, as they were only allowed to go now and then, on special occasions. To-day they were unusually gay and happy, because they knew the Fourth at the Refuge to be a great day, and especially because some of their favorite friends were to share their pleasure. Amy, Irene, Ben, and Paul, who had never visited the Refuge, were full of anticipation, whetted by Rob and Kitty's glowing accounts of the delights to be expected.

As they drove into the grounds, they were dismayed to see the crowds of people pouring in.

"I am afraid we are too late," said Amy. "We shall not be able to even get in."

“Oh, papa’s a director, you know,” said Kitty, “so there are always seats saved on the platform for us.”

Amy perceived the advantages of being related to a director when the polite Assistant Superintendent made a pathway for their party through the envious crowd pressing around the chapel doors, and ushered them to fine seats on the platform, where were seated the other directors and their families, the speakers, and various honored guests. Later the doors were opened, and all admitted who could find seats. The rest had to content themselves with waiting outside for the exercises later on the grounds. The seats in the body of the house, reserved for the Refuge boys, were still vacant.

Presently one of the lady teachers took her seat at the piano, and struck up a march. The doors in the rear opened, and the fourth division, the youngest boys, marched in, two by two, and took their seats. Then followed the third, second, and first divisions of boys. All the boys were dressed in blue uniforms, and each division had its own officers, promoted from the ranks for good conduct. These officers with their shoulder straps, standing erect at the head of the seats until their division was seated, presented a fine, soldierly appearance. The girls were marched into the gallery extending across the rear of the chapel. There were nearly three hundred children in all, about one-third girls.

It was long before the shy Amy could lift her eyes to face all these children. Not until they rose to sing did she venture to look at them. The exercises consisted of singing and speaking. Bright boys were

selected to speak patriotic pieces appropriate to the day. Proudly did the young orators ascend the platform, and loudly were their fiery utterances applauded by the other boys.

No one could look over that sea of youthful faces without being deeply moved. Some of the faces, especially among the older boys, looked hard and bad, but many boys had fine heads and good faces, and were evidently here not so much from innate badness, as from evil surroundings and influences. One could not help feeling what a power in the world either for good or bad were these two hundred boys; what a difference it made to their city whether they grew up to be upright, true, industrious citizens, or lapsed into downright criminals. Touching was it to see the tiny little ones, as good and sweet as any children, who simply had never had a chance. How Christ-like seemed the effort to save all these children, good and bad, and give them the chance in life that fate seemed to have denied them.

It was something worth while to hear the Refuge children let themselves out in the singing. Perhaps the effect could hardly be called melodious, but the immense volume, heartiness, and swing of it were certainly inspiring. In "The Red, White, and Blue," it seemed as if the building's brick walls were in danger before the tremendous outburst on the chorus,

"Thy banners make tyranny tremble
When borne by the red, white, and blue."

If "tyranny" did not tremble, it certainly was not the boys' fault. The Hillside Avenue children

caught the inspiration, and sang with might and main, though Irene whispered to Amy, between the verses, —

“I can’t hear a word I’m singing, can you?”

“No,” said Amy, “I feel my lips going, and that is all.”

In the gallery were several colored girls, endowed with the rich plaintive contralto voice that seems the especial gift of their race, as if born of long years of suffering. In “*Tenting on the Old Camp Ground*,” the boys sang the song, the girls coming in on the chorus, the contralto voices so effective as to bring tears to many eyes in the touching pathos they threw into

“Tenting to-night, tenting to-night,
Tenting on the old camp ground.”

“*Hail Columbia*” and the “*Star-Spangled Banner*” were fairly torn to pieces by the onset of the three hundred lusty voices. Then all sat down, much refreshed by this outpouring of song, and Mr. Clover and another director made short addresses. A lady sang a solo, a gentleman executed a brilliant fantasia on the violin with piano accompaniment. Then the children stood again and sang “*Marching through Georgia*.” It was enough to make any one want to bleed and die for his country, then and there, only to hear the Refuge children come down on

“When we were marching through Georgia.”

The singing of “*America*” concluded the chapel exercises, and the audience felt that the country ought to be safe, for another year, at least.

The company adjourned to the large field of five acres surrounded by high brick walls in the rear of the buildings. On one side an amphitheatre of seats was erected, capable of accommodating two or three hundred persons, but the seats were as nothing to-day to the crowd that overflowed them, and camped out on the grass all around. Good places had however been reserved for the directors and their friends.

Now came a military drill, in which the boys' appearance did themselves and their drill-master much credit, and a fine flag-drill by the little children of the Kindergarten class, who were pretty and cunning, as all little children are. Next followed all sorts of races; a sack-race, hurdle-race, foot-race, potato-race, barrel-race, and the climbing a greased pole, in all of which pleasing exercises the Hillside Avenue children took the deepest interest, laughing until they were tired. On top of the greased pole was a fine base-ball bat, the prize of the lucky fellow who could take it down. As one failed, another sprang forward to take his place.

"There," said Rob, "I believe that fellow's going to get it. See, he can almost touch it now. Oh, isn't that too bad!" cried Rob and all the other children, who had been watching the seeming winner with breathless interest, as, a moment later, he slid slowly and helplessly down the pole, just before he had touched the bat, amidst the laughs and jeers of boys and men.

Now a boy started up the pole who was evidently resolved to win. Apparently he had prepared his hands in such a way that they would not slip, and he made each grasp tell, going up the pole with a steady,

dogged determination that made one think what a fine thing it would be if he should put the same grit and steady upward pull into his life. He brought the bat down, amid the ringing applause of the multitude.

“That is the kind of boy that can be whatever he sets out to be, that goes to the top everywhere, whenever he makes up his mind that he will,” said Mr. Clover to the gentleman next him.

At the close there was a foot-race open to the spectators. Rob, Ben, and Paul could not resist this, and made a fine spurt around the track, coming back flushed with heat, if not with glory.

After the exercises in the field were over, Mr. Clover took his party all over the buildings, into the school-rooms, sleeping-rooms, the tin-shop, tailor, carpenter, and shoe shops and printing-office, where the boys were taught trades as one means of helping them to an honest manhood. In the large dining-room they had the good fortune to encounter the pleasant-faced matron, evidently a woman of much penetration, for she said, —

“These children must be hungry. Let me give them some of our gingerbread.”

It was something to see as many loaves of gingerbread at once as the matron’s store revealed; and she cut the children huge chunks of the same size and shape as those stacked beside each plate in the dining-room. Dinner-time being near, and the gingerbread soft and new, the children did not find fault with the size of the pieces.

They did not stay for the fireworks in the evening, which Rob assured them were “immense, I tell you,”

but drove home towards sunset, a happy, chattering company, full of laugh and talk over the amusing incidents of the races.

After dinner, it was delightful to get out of their best clothes, and into their fire-cracker costumes again, and prepare for the joys of the evening. Before the sun had hardly vanished, Rob thought it was time to begin the fireworks. But his father, with that provoking lack of enthusiasm sometimes marking fathers, kept saying, —

“Wait a while, Rob. It is too early yet.”

“There goes a fire balloon now,” said Rob, looking up into the summer evening sky, where, far aloft, apparently among the stars which were beginning faintly to twinkle here and there, floated a red ball.

“Whiz--z--z--z !”

“There ! The Goodings are sending off their rockets already ! And there goes another over at Oak Grove ! And the Poseys and the Neales are beginning. Can’t I begin now, father ?”

Seeing that Rob was no longer to be suppressed, Mr. Clover, cheerfully aided by Rob and Kitty, brought their huge pile of fireworks out on the porch.

Amy now flew about to get hers ready for action. Something of the boy that lies dormant in every man, no matter how old and staid he is, woke up in Professor Strong, and he took an active part in helping Amy send off her fireworks, quite as if he enjoyed it. The rockets were a trial to Amy’s nerves, and she much preferred the Roman candles.

“See,” she cried to her mother, who sat on the porch, looking on, “I am a fairy, and I wave my magic wand and make stars.”

The little figure so slender and erect, waving proudly the dark wand, whence shot forth in every direction dazzling stars of brilliant color, did look fairy-like indeed, in her mother's opinion.

When her last pin-wheel had flopped its last flop, when even the big flower-pot had gone up in a blaze of glory, Amy ran over to the Clovers', where several other children had obligingly come to help Rob and Kitty with their fireworks.

Hillside Avenue was now under a full headway of Fourth of July glory. Whizzing rockets shot up through the trees in every direction, and from all sides came the "Oh-h-h! Ah-h-h!" of irrepressible admiration as, far aloft, the rockets broke into shimmering showers of many-colored stars. All up and down the avenue red fire lighted up trees and houses picturesquely, and against its glare could be seen many little black figures hopping and darting actively about, like so many brownies. Great was the banging and whizzing, and brilliant the effects. In the midst of it all, much excitement was created by the appearance of a large fire-balloon, about five feet tall, slowly descending upon the avenue. An eager crowd of boys followed below it, falling over each other as they ran with eyes fixed on the balloon, shouting, —

"It's going into that tree!" "No, it is n't!"
"Yes it is!" "Here she comes!" "There it is!"

"It's coming down on your lawn, Amy," said Rob.

"Oh, how nice," said Amy.

The balloon did descend upon the Strongs' lawn, that is, it would have done so, but before it could

touch the ground the foremost boys seized it and bore it off as legitimate spoils of war.

"I didn't care so very much about it," said Amy, making the best of her loss.

When six or seven girls and boys, wild with excitement, are all shooting off fireworks together, something usually happens. In vain did Mr. Clover use his utmost vigilance to make them careful; in vain did he caution them, —

"Rob, don't aim so low. Shoot higher. Kitty, stand farther off. Amy, don't point your Roman candle towards the house. Van, be more careful. Ben, aim that straight up."

Mrs. Strong and Mrs. Clover also called out words of warning from their respective porches. Before long, a cry of pain was heard through the darkness.

"There! I was afraid some one would be hurt," said Mrs. Strong, running over to the Clovers' porch. "Is it you, Amy?"

"Rob shot a star out of a Roman candle right into Laura's eye!"

"I didn't mean to," said Rob. "I was waving it about, and I didn't see where the stars were going."

Laura was crying, partly from fright, partly from pain. Every one was alarmed, an injury to the eye is so serious a matter. Mrs. Clover and Mrs. Strong took Laura into the house, bathed the eye with soothing applications, and found, much to their relief, that the star had gone luckily, not into the eye, but close above it. When the pain had abated, Laura, her zeal for Fourth of July not at all lessened, sat on the porch with a bandage over one eye, and watched the

fireworks with the other. Rob burned a finger badly, but that was the only other accident that night.

When every one else had subsided, when even the Clovers and Neales had fired their last shot, the lucky Posey boys, whose father had fireworks for sale in his store, still kept on with a brilliant display. At last, however, a deep, blessed quiet settled down over the avenue, unbroken by a sound. The tired children gladly took to their beds after the long, happy day, and every one slept hard that night. "The Fourth" was over for another year.

The next morning, as Cousin Elizabeth was dressing, she remarked to her husband, —

"I am so thankful that Fourth of July is over, and none of the children are hurt. Jack burned one hand a little, but still not seriously, and I think he is none the worse for" —

"Bang! Whang!" came a loud report from in front of the house, followed by a howl of pain.

"Oh dear, what can that be!" cried Cousin Elizabeth. "That was Ronald's voice, I am sure."

She and Mr. Neale rushed down stairs, to find Annette bringing Ronald in from the lawn in sad plight. Ronald had risen before any one else in the house was up, and gone out with the virtuous intention, as he said, of picking up the scattered scraps of red and blue paper, rocket sticks and empty Roman candles, the remains of last night's glories, whose débris strewed the whole lawn. There was a flower-pot which had not exploded the night before, as Ronald had perhaps noticed. Examining it, and finding it still well filled with powder, he had been struck

with the happy idea of pouring its contents out on the walk and touching a match to the heap.

"Ronald! How *could* you do such a thing!" exclaimed his mother.

"I wanted to see what it would do," moaned Ronald.

He had soon learned what powder will do when you apply a lighted match to it. Both his face and hands were badly burned, and his eyebrows and lashes singed off. There was much anxiety about his eyes, which pained him severely. His face was already so swollen that it was impossible to tell how serious was the injury to the eyes. What if Ronald were doomed to go through life blind, thought his parents with sinking hearts.

The doctor was hurriedly summoned, and Ronald was put to bed in a dark room, face and hands swathed in linen cloths wet often with healing and cooling lotions. His pain threw him into a fever. Patiently did his loving mother, but lately released from attendance on Jack's sick bed, sit beside him all the long, hot day in the close, darkened room, trying to comfort Ronald, and alleviate a little his suffering. What a blessed invention mothers are, and what would girls and boys do without them? "As one whom his mother comforteth" are the Bible's words to describe the love of God.

CHAPTER X.

GOING AWAY.

PHILIP and Gladys had been on the island a month, and their enthusiastic letters describing its delights aggravated Amy's impatience to be there. The continued heat had taken away both her color and appetite, leaving her pale and languid, and her mother, realizing how much she needed a change, hastened her preparations.

The note of departure had begun to sound all up and down the avenue. Every day the big railway wagon went by, piled high with trunks. Dr. Trimble's family had already been some time at their island in Lake Erie, near Put-in-Bay. Professor and Mrs. Evarts had departed for the West Virginia mountains. The closed houses began to make Hill-side Avenue seem rather lonely.

Cousin Elizabeth had only been waiting for Ronald to recover sufficiently from his gunpowder experiment to start for the seashore. Ronald was now well enough to travel. True, he looked rather odd with no eyebrows or lashes, and the red scars on his cheeks were not becoming. It was quite certain that no artists would be tormenting him to sit for his picture this summer. But his parents were so thankful that his eyes were not permanently injured, they

felt his loss of beauty a comparatively small trial. When Amy went over one evening, as she often did, to carry some flowers to Cousin Elizabeth, her cousin said, —

“Well, Amy, we are really off at last; we go day after to-morrow, unless something happens. I am impatient to get away before anything else happens to the children. George engaged our sleeping berths yesterday.”

“I wish we were ready to go too,” said Amy, “it would be such fun to travel together. Mamma expects to go next week sometime. I can hardly wait for the time to come.”

The next night, Amy and Kitty went down to bid Laura good-by, as she was to leave early the next morning. The Dawsons were going to spend the summer at their cottage among the pines and lakelets of Northern Michigan, stopping awhile in Indiana on the way.

“You must be sure to write to me, girls, and tell me all about the fun you are having,” said Laura.

“We will, if you will write first,” said the girls.

The departure of the three Dawson children, and of Ronald, Jack, and Phyllis, left a perceptible void on the avenue, even although there were plenty of children still left on this populous street. But when the Clovers went away, Amy would have found it hard to be resigned, but for the knowledge that she herself was so soon to leave.

The Clovers all came over to the Strongs to say good-by. Mrs. Clover was going to take the children to her mother's farm, about eighty miles north of Cincinnati, and leave them there for the summer

vacation, returning herself after a short visit. The children were all brightness and animation: Kitty had on a new blue sailor suit and hat, and Rob was magnificent in a new summer suit, new straw hat, and new tan shoes.

"I fear, Rob, those shoes and clothes will not look quite so nice and fresh when you come back," said Mrs. Strong.

"I'm afraid not," said Rob, laughing. "We always have lots of fun up at grandma's."

"I know it took five pair of trousers to carry him through last summer on the farm," said his mother, "and hats and shoes without number."

Amy and Kitty, their arms around each other's waists, walked down to the electric car together. There was much kissing good-by, and many promises to write often. Duke followed the party down too, and seemed to suspect that something was wrong. He stood looking wistfully after the open car from which Kitty and Rob were still waving farewells to Amy as they glided swiftly away. Then he followed Amy home, and clung closely to her after that, seeming to have adopted her for his little mistress.

Irene and Amy were constantly together now, and Irene said, mournfully, —

"I really don't know what I *shall* do, Amy, after you are gone."

"I will write you all about the island," said Amy. "And you are going to have that lovely trip on your father's steamer. I think that will be really fascinating."

"Yes, I think it will be very pleasant," said Irene. "We are going to take Dixie, you know, and if mamma decides to go, we shall take Sandy too."

"How funny," said Amy, "for a bird to take a voyage!"

"Oh, Sandy belongs to the navy, you know," said Irene.

Sandy was Irene's bird, a great pet in the family, even Mrs. Brownell addressing him as "darling child."

Amy's new trunk with "A. S." in big letters on one end, had duly come out from Shillito's. A wonderful trunk it was, not only in Amy's opinion, but in that of those children on the street who were taken upstairs to admire it. Amy had already packed and unpacked it several times. To pack her trunk, seemed to bring the time for going to the island nearer.

When her mother came to pack the trunk in earnest, she found it nearly filled, though no clothing had yet gone in, and most of Amy's work had to be undone.

"You can't possibly take this game of Messenger Boy, Amy," said her mother, "or these other games. They fill up the trunk so."

"I thought it would be so pleasant to play with them on the island," said Amy.

"You will not use them there. You will play outdoors all the time. The paint boxes will be useful for rainy days. And I suppose you will want all these drawing-blocks and pencils. But you cannot take all these dolls. Dolls take up so much room."

Dolls were always a mooted point in travelling, between Mrs. Strong and Amy. Amy loved her dolls like children, and half believed they would pine for her during her absence. One summer when Amy was younger, Mrs. Strong went east with thirteen dolls in

her trunk, four of them being little dolls, tucked in surreptitiously by Amy just before the trunk was locked, and not discovered until it was opened.

"I wanted to bring them on to see their aunt Dinah," was Amy's excuse, Dinah being a venerable rag doll of her mother's childhood, then kept at grandpa's house in Massachusetts, but now in Amy's possession.

"I thought I could take more dolls now I had a trunk of my own," said Amy.

"No. You must remember that you are larger now, and your clothes and hats take up much more room than formerly. I can get in one large doll."

"Then you may pack Lord Fauntleroy, and I will take Violet in the cars with me for company," said Amy. "And do please, mamma, just squeeze Undine in somewhere. I want her to go East on account of her beautiful bathing suit. Besides, I think her health needs a change."

This compromise being made, Amy turned her attention to putting on Violet's travelling dress, and packing that young lady's extensive wardrobe in a little brown hand-satchel that Faith had given Amy, which she always used for dolls' clothes on her trips East. Then she ran around the neighborhood to say good-by to all her little friends.

This was quite superfluous, for the next morning, when Professor Strong was escorting his wife and Amy to take the car for the station, the little folks were all out on the sidewalk, sorry to see Amy going away, but crying, —

"Good-by, Amy. I hope you'll have a nice time."

Even Mr. Green, who always took an outside part

in whatever of importance occurred on Hillside Avenue, contrived to be standing out by Dr. Trimble's as they passed along, and waved his hand with a friendly grin and "Good-by, Rabbit," to Amy's "Good-by, Mr. Green."

Duke tried to follow, but, being commanded to go home, stood under the Strong's' elms looking wistfully after his little friend. When Professor Strong returned that night, and sat alone on his deserted porch where usually there was so much lively company, Duke came over and lay down close beside him, as if saying, —

"We will keep each other company."

Professor Strong could not leave home yet, but expected to join his family on the island a few weeks later.

When, on board the sleeping car "Ariel," Amy kissed her father good-by, she said, —

"Oh, papa, only think, we shall be on the island to-morrow! It doesn't seem possible it can be so near."

"Yes, if all goes well, you will reach Plymouth about six o'clock to-morrow afternoon," said her father, smiling at the enthusiastic face of his little girl, all beaming with joyful anticipations. "But I must go now. Good-by, Amy. Be a good girl, and don't give your mother any trouble."

"Amy is always a nice little traveller," said Mrs. Strong. "I want no better travelling companion."

While Mrs. Strong's parents were living, she had gone east every summer, and Amy, having been her companion from baby-hood, was quite an experienced traveller, and always entertaining company. She

never found the journey tiresome, for she had many devices to pass away the time.

"This section is our little house," she said, as the train, now well under weigh, sped along the banks of Mill Creek. "We can do what we like here. I know Violet is too warm in her gray travelling dress. I am going to put on her white dress for the middle of the day."

This change was made from the resources of the little travelling-bag, much to the admiration of two children in the section opposite, a girl and boy about Amy's age, who watched her doings with interest. Violet was then held up to the window to admire the scenery. But as the train was now dashing through the rich but level farming lands of Ohio, varied only by stretches of woods, an occasional farmhouse, or a straggling village, the scenery was monotonous, and Amy soon announced, —

"Violet is tired and sleepy, she was up so early this morning. She must take a nap. And I'm hungry, mamma."

"What, already?" said her mother, smiling, as she laid down her magazine, but not surprised, for Amy, in her excitement, had eaten almost no breakfast, and Mrs. Strong was prepared for this emergency.

Not only was Amy really hungry, but she always enjoyed having the little table put in, as it made the housekeeping in their section-house seem more real. When the porter had brought the table, she took great pleasure in setting it with the luxuries of the lunch-basket. No sooner did the children opposite see these preparations, than the pangs of hunger seized upon them too, and their mother's lunch-basket

had to come forth. After Amy had finished her luncheon the table was left at her request, and she took her block and pencil and drew on it a long time. Even the conductor stopped and looked over her shoulder to see what so absorbed the little girl with the golden hair and the bright, shy blue eyes, and smiled as he went on. Amy was drawing a scene at a dance which Ernestine, the heroine of the story she was imagining, was then attending. The dance was proceeding with great vigor, and the positions of the legs of the gentlemen engaged in the waltz, and the angles at which the tails of their dress-coats swung out, were certainly funny. From time to time the exciting parts of this story were recounted to her mother.

"See, mamma," she said, showing Ernestine with a crown blazing with jewels on her head seated at a table writing, while liveried menials bowed to the earth around her. "Ernestine has married the King of Servia, and now she is writing to ask her poor old grandmother who brought her up to come and visit her. She is so kind and good; not a bit proud, if she has become a queen. This is the letter."

"DEAR GRANDMA, — I now write to you as the Queen of Servia! Please come and visit me and bring as many people as you want to the palace, which is lovely.

Your affectionate granddaughter,

THE QUEEN OF SERVIA!"

"I guess her Grandmother Lawton will be surprised when she gets that letter," said Amy, proceeding now to draw the adventures of the young princes and princesses, children of the Queen. Amy's tales were like

real life in that there was no end to them. They went on and on indefinitely.

The children opposite, who had nothing with which to amuse themselves, and were twisting about uneasily, their chief pleasure consisting in running out to wash their hands or get a drink, wondered what Amy was doing, and would have been glad to make her acquaintance, but the shy Amy shrank within herself, and did not meet their advances. Nor did she say anything to the little boy in the section behind hers who stood up on his seat and hung over her shoulder, watching the adventures of Queen Ernestine and her descendants with breathless interest. She pretended not to see him, although she was careful to hold her book so he could see.

To travel along in this world of romance, where fairies, princes, and enchanters were mere every-day folks, was very pleasant to Mrs. Strong. Amy's pretty fancies threw a charm over actual life, which is sometimes rather prosy. When Amy was tired of drawing, she read in one of her favorite books, Hans Christian Andersen's tales, having a paper-covered copy, easy to carry. Then she and her mother had luncheon again.

It was now noon, the day very warm, the sun beating in at their windows. Mrs. Strong drew down the curtains, had the porter bring a pillow, and Amy was quite willing to play it was night and lie down. Soon, lulled by the steady motion and roar of the train, she fell fast asleep and had a long nap, from which she awakened, bright and refreshed. As the afternoon wore on, her shyness gradually wore away too, and finally she became acquainted with Helen and Jimmie,

the children opposite. Jimmie, who was frisking uneasily about, stood in the aisle, braced his hands on the arms of the seats, and tried to see how high in the air he could swing his feet. He went a little too high, lost his hold, and fell his whole length in the aisle. Amy could not help laughing at this, especially as Jimmie, who seemed very good-natured, with a friendly smile to Amy as he picked himself up and brushed the dust off his stockings, said, —

“I was a little too smart that time, was n’t I?”

“Jimmie is always trying to turn somersaults, or stand on his head, or do some performance,” said Helen.

“I’m going to belong to the gymnasium as soon as I am big enough,” said Jimmie, “Father says I may. So I have to keep practising. Were you drawing pictures this morning? May I see them?”

Helen and Jimmie came into Amy’s section, and Amy not only showed them her morning’s drawings, but drew for them the “Adventures of an Apple Pie,” and then the startling incidents in the life of Johnny Jackdaw.

“Johnnie is just like Jimmie,” said Helen, after they had laughed at Johnnie stealing a ride on a donkey and being kicked off, going out in a canoe and tipping over, his two feet sticking straight up out of the pond, having the mumps, stepping on a wasp’s nest, and finally tickling the bald head of his old grandfather asleep in his easy-chair, and getting soundly whipped for it. “You’re always doing things like those, Jimmie.”

“Boys are not girls,” said Jimmie, rather contemptuously.

Helen held Violet and admired her while Amy drew. Then they told each other riddles. So the afternoon, long, hot, and dusty though it was, passed pleasantly away. The sun sank low, and the porter left the front door open, letting the cool air from Lake Erie sweep refreshingly through the heated car. But what most revived every one was the putting on of the dining-car, and the welcome sound of the head waiter's voice, as he passed through the car, calling, —

“Dinner all ready in the dining-car, last car in the rear. First call to dinner in the dining-car!”

People who had been living all day from their lunch-baskets welcomed this chance of getting a warm dinner. Amy thought it delightful to sit eating as they glided along amid a pleasant landscape, the whole western sky glowing red with the last glories of the sinking sun, and ate more dinner than she had for weeks.

All the children in the sleeping-car were ready, not to say anxious, to retire soon after dark, impatient to try their novel beds. Jimmie in particular was overcome with sleep, according to his own statements.

“I'm so sleepy, mamma,” he said; “can't the porter make my bed now?”

His roguish black eyes looked far from sleepy. However, his mother at last yielded to his entreaties, and asked the porter to make up her berths. Jimmie was to occupy the upper berth. No sooner was it ready than he plunged head foremost behind the curtains. But this disappearance was only temporary, for soon Amy saw him pop up like a Jack in a box,

laughing at her over the curtains of the upper berth. Then he popped his head out between the curtains, making up funny faces. Then he turned a somersault in his berth, his feet waving aloft near the car's roof. He was here, there, everywhere. There was no knowing where he would appear next. Amy was greatly entertained.

"Jimmie is as good as a circus," she said to Helen, who was divided between laughing at Jimmie's tricks, which she could n't help, and a feeling of responsibility for him as his older sister, which made her say to her mother, —

"Mamma, I should think you would make Jimmie behave."

Even the porter, who was quite hardened to boys, laughed at Jimmie's pranks, and the tired, warm, grown-up passengers, to whom both sleeping-cars and life itself had ceased to be the delightful novelty they were to Jimmie, forgot their fatigue as they smiled at the little boy's capers.

Amy, meantime, had undressed Violet, and put on her night-gown. Mrs. Strong had the mattress from the upper berth laid on the lower, and the upper berth closed up, so they had quite an airy bedroom, that is, for a sleeping-car. Amy felt very cosy and safe as she nestled down behind her mother; and whispered her prayers into her ear, — prayers that seemed to have a new, real meaning as the train, with screaming whistle, rushed and roared on through the darkness.

The tired little girl was soon fast asleep. Once in the night she was wakened by the stopping of the train, and loud voices. Lifting the curtain and peeping out, she found they were in a large station, about

whose deserted spaces a few people hurried to and fro with echoing footsteps in the bright gas-light. This momentary glimpse into a strange world was fascinating to Amy's imagination. Soon the train plunged on into the outer darkness, and Amy fell asleep again, but when her mother wakened in the morning, there was the little figure up on its elbow, nothing visible of Amy's head but the long yellow braid hanging below the curtain.

"Oh, mamma," said Amy, "I hope I did not waken you. I do so love to look out of the car window, and not know where I am, and see strange people and places gliding by, just like a picture. The sun's up, and it looks very warm. Only think, we shall be on the island to-day! I can hardly believe it."

In spite of all Amy's devices for amusing herself, and of the picturesque scenery of Massachusetts through which they were travelling, it seemed a long day before they reached Boston, although it was only three o'clock. Here Amy parted with Helen and Jimmie, who were going to Swampscott. They now seemed like old friends. As their home was in Louisville, Amy felt that perhaps she should never see them again; but Jimmie said, —

"I have an uncle in Cincinnati. When I go up to visit him, I shall come to see you, Amy."

"So shall I," said Helen.

"I do hope you will come sometime," said Amy. "I will show you all my dolls and my chickens, and take your pictures, and introduce you to all my friends, and we will have a beautiful time."

In the Boston station almost the first person they saw was Sydney, delighted to meet again his mother

and little sister. Great news did Sydney have for them.

“Faith and the babies are both down at the island for a few days, and I am going down with you now. I shall go down every night while my family are there.”

“Then I shall see my nieces!” exclaimed Amy in rapture. “And have the island, and the boats, and everything! Oh-h-h!”

CHAPTER XI.

THE ISLAND.

PLYMOUTH was reached in the early evening, and they started for the island in an open carriage. Quiet Plymouth village, with its old houses and streets shaded by ancient elms, seemed a charming place to these weary pilgrims from the west, who had been for nearly two days in the heat and cinders of the noisy train. Amy, who had studied United States history a little, and who had read or been read to all her life, knew well the story of the Pilgrim Fathers, and looked with deep interest on Leyden Street, and up the Town Square to Burial Hill, as Sydney pointed out to her these points associated so familiarly with the daily life of the Pilgrims.

Soon the village was left behind, and the carriage, turning from the main road, entered the woods. As they drove on, they met not a person. All around were the dark woods, in whose dusky solitudes, perchance, wild animals and Indians might still linger. At least, so thought Amy as she nestled closer to her mother, saying in a tone of awe, —

“How still it is! There! I heard a rustle in the leaves!”

“Nothing very dangerous, Amy,” said Sydney. “Nothing worse than an owl or a musk-rat.”

At last they met some one, a picturesque figure striding along, a tall colored woman of erect, vigorous form, around whose head was wound a bright bandanna. This quaint, foreign-looking figure encountered in the dusky depths of Plymouth woods did not surprise Amy. Anything might be possible in this land of enchantment. It was a prosaic downfall of her romantic fancies when Sydney said, —

“How d’ye do, Chloe?” and then added, as Chloe passed with a bright smile that showed her white teeth, —

“That is Chloe, our cook. There is a circus in Plymouth to-night, and she is going up to spend the night with a friend. She’s a capital cook.”

The woods grew darker and more dense as they drove on, and they felt more and more solitary and remote from the world. By and by, in the light of the full moon just rising, they caught glimpses of a sheet of water to the left through the trees.

“That is Billington Sea,” said Sydney. “We are almost there now.”

Soon they came out into an open space on a height looking down on the pond. The full moon, low in the east, sent a long trail of light across the water. There lay the dark island, whence twinkled friendly lights through the trees. Across the water shot a small skiff, the plash of the oars heard distinctly in the all-pervading stillness, the driver having put their trunks on the ground and departed.

“Philip is rowing over for us,” said Sydney. “They heard our voices, no doubt, and the wheels, as we came through the woods.”

The boat grated on the sandy beach, and Philip,

holding its prow with one hand, greeted his mother and Amy most affectionately, saying, —

“Jump in, Amy. Go down to the little seat in the stern. You’re only a feather, you’ll not count.”

Amy, giggling nervously from joy and excitement, climbed in, and was surprised to find how a boat wabbles about when you try to walk in it.

“But our trunks, Philip,” said Mrs. Strong, who could not at once rid herself of the habits of civilization. “What shall we do with them?”

“I’ll row over for them after supper,” said Philip.

“But is it safe to leave them here alone?” queried Mrs. Strong.

“Perfectly. There is no one to molest them.”

So the trunks with all their precious contents were left alone in the dark and the woods. What the owls, the crickets, the squirrels, and beetles thought of these strange intruders in their domain will never be known.

The boat, impelled by the strong arms of Sydney and Philip, shot off across the water. Amy thought it perfect bliss as she lay back in the stern trailing her hand in the water, and feeling the cool, sweet evening breeze blow over her bare head.

As they made towards a little pier, several forms were seen on it, and there was the wild barking of a small dog, with commands, “Be still, Betty,” in Gladys’s familiar voice.

When the tired travellers landed, great was the excitement and warm the welcome from Gladys and her sister Sue, to say nothing of her pug-dog, Betty. But, best of all, here was Faith holding in her arms sweet little Madge clad only in her night-dress. She

had calmly refused to go to sleep at her usual hour, apparently suspecting that something unusual was to occur, and determined to be in the midst of it.

"Papa's naughty little girl," Sydney called her, as he took her from her mother. Madge clasped his neck with her little arms, and nestled her curly head down on his shoulder, not at all afraid of his severity. Sometimes she lifted her head and peeped shyly at Amy, then hid her eyes quickly again when she found that she was observed.

"What a dear, sweet little thing!" said admiring Aunt Amy.

After supper, they sat a while on the porch in the moonlight, talking after the wont of friends that have been long separated. Then Mrs. Strong said, —

"We cannot talk everything over to-night if we try. Luckily, we have a good many weeks before us. So I think we tired travellers should go to bed, especially Amy."

The cottage was really two cottages, connected by a wide covered porch. Mrs. Strong and Amy had to cross this porch and go through the dining-room, to reach the stairs leading to their room above. Tired and sleepy as Amy was, she could not help expressing her delight at the novelty of her surroundings.

"How still it is," she said, "and how strange it seems not to hear a sound but the frogs and the whip-poorwills, and the wind in the pines. I keep expecting to hear wheels going by, or a horse trotting. I can't realize that I am really on an island. How far away Hillside Avenue seems, does n't it, mamma? It seems like a far away dream. I wonder what papa is doing. Thinking about us, I guess."

"Don't talk any more now, Amy," said her mother, who was unpacking a few necessities from the trunks. "Lie still and go to sleep so you will wake up bright and fresh to-morrow, ready to enjoy it all."

Amy tried to obey. She lay looking at the queer bare rafters (for the cottage was unplastered), sloping down so close to her head, her mind in such a whirl of happy anticipation that it was not easy to go to sleep. Her mother put out the kerosene lamp and got into bed. Through the wide open window the moonlight fell in a white square on the bare floor. "Whip-poor-will," "Whip-poor-will," came from the trees all around, mingled with the "Boom, Boom," of the frogs.

"The frogs say, 'Go home,' 'Go home,' mamma," said Amy, when her mother thought her fast asleep.

"Don't talk, Amy," said her mother drowsily.

Soon the air, so cool, sweet, and pure, soothed even Amy to sleep, and the next thing she knew the sun was shining in at their window instead of the moon, and Chloe, who had arrived early, was rattling pots and pans about in the kitchen below, as she sang,

"Swing low, sweet chariot."

Not only was Chloe singing in the kitchen, but from every tree resounded cries of "Phebe! Phebe!" and the trills and runs of robins and bluebirds innumerable. Amy sprang out of bed and ran to the window.

"I think it is so interesting to look out in the morning and see what kind of a place you are in, when you came in the night," she said. "Oh, isn't it beautiful here?" she exclaimed, as she looked out

on the shining waters of the pond gleaming through the trees.

"Yes, it is a most beautiful spot," said her mother. "But you must hurry and dress now, or you will be late to breakfast."

Amy hastily donned the blue sailor suit which was to be her working costume, and ran down stairs, eager to investigate this new world into which she had come in the darkness. On the porch she found little Madge and Ruth with tiny wrappers on over their night-dresses, making an early breakfast at a little table set in the space between the cottages. Katie, their nurse, was in attendance on the two little ladies.

"What a pleasant breakfast-room you have," said Amy, as she sat down on the floor, to begin a closer acquaintance with her small nieces.

Madge was three, baby Ruth only two years old. They were as round and rosy and well as two children could be. Although a trifle shy at first of this new aunt whom they had never seen, Amy's wiles soon won their hearts, and they all had a merry game of romps together, running around and around the two cottages on the wide porch, until the grown-up people's breakfast was ready.

"I feel almost as if I were on shipboard," said Mrs. Strong after breakfast, as they sat on the wide railing of the porch.

"We are almost as isolated as if we were," said Gladys. "That is the charm of the place; the feeling of perfect independence. We can wear old clothes and do as we please, and no one can come near us unless we choose to row over and bring them."

"Why, can you row, Gladys?" asked Amy.

"Yes indeed I can, and so can Sue."

"I will soon teach you to row, Amy," said Philip.

"Oh, will you, Philip? How perfectly lovely!" said the delighted Amy. But now Sue wanted to take her to explore the island.

Sue was about sixteen, a young girl of fresh, unspoiled nature who made a congenial companion for Amy, and they chatted away like old acquaintances as they climbed up and down the rocky woodland paths, slippery with pine needles.

The island contained nearly three acres covered with woods, chiefly oaks, pines and hemlocks, with a few walnuts. The gnarled branches of the trees, and their twisted, broken tops showed the severity of the storms that swept over the island in winter. Even in summer there was almost always a breeze, cooled by blowing across the pond, and sweet with the fragrance of pines and ferns.

"This pond is five or six miles around," said Sue.

"I should call it a lake rather than a pond," said Amy.

"I suppose it would be a lake anywhere but in Plymouth," said Sue. "Chloe says there are three hundred and sixty-five ponds, big and little in Plymouth, one for each day in the year."

"Oh, how pleasant these seats are," said Amy, as they came out on the point of the island farthest from the cottage.

Philip, who had a genius for carpentry, had nailed boards across three gnarled, bent trees that hung off over the bank. He had made foot-rests and backs to these seats, so here one could sit cosily, overhang-

ing a sandy beach where the pond lapped gently below.

"We call this Breeze Point," said Sue, "because there is always a breeze here when nowhere else."

"I shall come here often to read," said Amy.

"You must see the pine grove," said Sue. "We call that our out-door parlor, and Philip has put up a delightful swing there."

The pine grove was in the very heart of the island. The girls pushed through the tangle of underbrush, and came out into a clear open space where stood around majestic old pines, their tall, straight trunks bearing the green tops high in the air. They swayed and sighed solemnly, seeming to murmur a tale of bygone joys that made one half sad to hear, one knew not why. Here also Philip had put convenient seats, and between two of the pines that seemed arranged expressly for the purpose he had placed a swing.

Of course Amy was enchanted with all this, so suited to her tastes. Sue swung her high up among the tree tops, the fresh, pine-scented breeze blowing her hair out like so much spun sunshine, and tinting her cheeks a delicate pink.

"I feel like a bird," she said joyously. "Here I go up, up, up; here I come down, down, downy."

From the direction of the house suddenly rang out a peculiar call.

"Walla-walla-walla-*wah*-hoo!" rang out a melodious voice.

"What's that?" asked Amy.

"That's our signal when we want each other," said Sue. "Philip says it is the war whoop of the aborigines of this island. We find it very convenient

when we are scattered about in the woods. I presume they are going somewhere, and want us to come."

"Walla-walla-walla-*wah*-hoo!" came the call again in two voices, harmonized to a fine chord.

Sue answered in the same fashion, and Amy began at once to practise this necessary accomplishment, and soon could "walla" equal to Sue herself.

Near the cottage they met Katie the nurse, with Madge and Ruth each carrying a tiny basket. Katie was taking them to the pine-grove parlor to play until nap time, and in the little baskets they would bring home pine-cones and other woodland treasures to mamma.

They looked very cunning, Amy thought, in their pink sun-hats, and she stopped to kiss them good-by, while Sue asked, —

"Where are the people, Katie?"

"Down on the wharf, I think," said Katie.

The girls ran down the steps to the wharf, where they found all their party about embarking in boats.

"We are going down the Town Brook for pond lilies," said Philip, "and thought perhaps you would like to go with us."

"Pond lilies! Of course we want to go. Which boat shall I get in, Philip?" asked Amy, eagerly.

"Gladys and I will row mother in the canoe, and Sue and Faith will row you in the yellow boat. You must sit very still in a boat, you know, Amy. You can't jump around in a boat that way unless you want a bath."

Faith and Sue, who kept time perfectly in rowing, pulled strongly away, bidding Philip a laughing adieu

as they left him behind. Amy, seated in state in the bow, announced, —

“I am Undine, the water spirit, being rowed by some of my slaves. But I would much rather row myself, even than to be so queenly.”

“I will teach you how when we go home,” said Faith. “It’s very easy. I want to keep ahead of Philip now.”

“Do see Betty,” said Amy. “How saucy her little black nose looks sticking up over the edge of the canoe.”

For Philip had another passenger of importance in the person of Gladys’s pug, Bettina Puggins, or Betty, as she was usually known among her familiar friends. Betty always seemed to consider pleasure excursions as arranged expressly on her account, and insisted on being taken along. She sat proudly up in the prow as the canoe glided swiftly through the water, evidently feeling herself in charge of the whole expedition.

The outlet of Billington Sea is a beautiful brook, called the “Town Brook” from the time of the earliest settlement. It is “the very sweet brook that runs under a hillside” mentioned in their earliest writings, whose discovery decided the storm-tossed, weary Pilgrims to disembark and settle on the spot which is now Plymouth. Sweet indeed must its clear water have tasted to them, after their long confinement on shipboard. Its waters are a clear amber as they glide over the sand, but dark brown in the deep, still pools that reflect every overhanging bush and flower as in a mirror.

The girls entered the Town Brook, and paddled

along its winding current, exclaiming in delight at the pink sweet-brier roses against which they brushed as they paddled down stream. The brook had a deep, strong current, ample to float the boat, but its course was narrow and winding. Steering required skilful management, as the girls soon learned. In trying to round a sudden bend, their prow stuck fast on an unseen tree-root projecting from the bank. In vain did they push and pull; they could not get off. Sometimes they succeeded in freeing themselves, only to have the current swing them around upon the snag again.

"There is no help for it," said Faith, stopping to take breath. "We shall simply have to wait until the canoe overtakes us."

When Philip came up, he could not resist laughing a little at the pride which had had such a fall. He threw a rope over to them, which Amy held fast. Then he and the girls pulled at the oars, and Gladys at the rope, and Betty stood up with her paws on the edge of the canoe and barked loudly, and so, by "a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether" they were afloat again.

Philip took the lead now, as being more familiar with the windings of the stream, and convoyed them safely to a pond made by a dam thrown across the brook. In the shallow edges of this pond, they found white pond lilies abundant, Amy, who loved every flower that grew, gathering not only many of these, but also all the sweet-brier roses she could carry.

On the shore they fell into conversation with an old gentleman who seemed disposed to be most cordial. Amy regarded with interest his gray hair, which was

braided in many little pigtails, each tied separately. It appeared that in his youth he had been a sailor, sailing on distant seas, and visiting many foreign lands. In his old age he was contented to give up a life of adventure and settle down quietly on shore in the tamer business of taking charge of this pond, whose reservoir fed several mills farther down stream. He seemed a quaint character, proper to meet on the shores of Plymouth's Town Brook, where you do not look for common-place folk, and if he preferred to braid his hair in pigtails, that was his own affair.

When the lily party reached home, while the others beautified the parlor with the flowers, trophies of wood and stream, Philip gave Amy a rowing lesson. She made such progress, that when, toward noon, Mrs. Strong went down to look for her, she was startled to find her alone in the yellow boat, paddling about in the cove near the wharf.

"Why, Amy Strong!" was all she could say.

"Only see me, mamma," said Amy, looking brightly up, her face, under the brown hat tipped so jauntily on the flowing hair, radiant with perfect satisfaction and flushed with exercise, "I can row all by myself. Philip says I learn very easily. Just see me."

Amy put on a great spurt and ran herself ashore.

"Ah, I didn't mean to do that. I can't always manage. The boat *will* turn around, when I want to go straight ahead. But I can push off again."

"No, come ashore now," said her mother. "You have rowed quite enough for the first time. I'll help you tie the boat."

When Amy had been on the porch long enough to

have the flush of her success subside, she found herself so tired with her unusually vigorous exercise that she was well contented to pass the afternoon reading at Breeze Point. Late in the afternoon, she heard Philip call from near the cottage,

“Walla-walla-walla-wah-hoo, Amy,” and ran up to see what he wanted.

She found that he had called her to try a new seat which he had been making expressly for her. He had taken an old cane seat rocking-chair that he had found discarded in the cellar, cut off the legs, and nailed the rest firmly up in a tree whose branches shot out over the pond.

“It’s rather high up,” said Philip, “but I know you are a great climber. Try it, and see how it goes.”

“I love to be high up in the trees, and I love to climb,” said Amy, as she scrambled nimbly up into the new seat, and lay back in it with great satisfaction. “It is lovely, Philip; exactly what I wanted, and I am so much obliged to you for thinking of it. I shall call it ‘The Perch.’”

Philip smiled, pleased that he had added to the happiness of his happy little sister, looking back as he walked to the cottage at the small blue-robed figure with the golden hair, high up in the tree, like a new species of bird. Many happy hours did Amy pass in the Perch, reading or drawing pictures of her pretty fancies, while the birds sang around her unafraid, the wavelets lapped gently beneath her, the green leaves rustled with cool murmurs, and through them shone the sparkling water.

That evening, when Sydney came down from Boston, bringing them the news from the great out-

side world whose existence they had almost forgotten, they decided to go out rowing. It was an unusually warm evening for the island, but, when the islanders spoke of the heat, Sydney said, —

“You really don’t know anything about heat down here. It has been absolutely torrid in Boston to-day; the hottest day of the season.”

“I found no trouble in keeping warm, rowing in the sun,” said Philip.

“The babies feel the heat to-night,” said Faith. “They are very restless, and Katie says they will not go to sleep.”

“We’ll take them out on the water for a while, then,” said Sydney. “It will cool and quiet them, and their room will be cooler too, later.”

“Do you think it will be quite safe?” asked Grandma Strong. “If they should be restless, and tip the boat — ”

“Perfectly,” said Sydney. “They are quite old salts. You will see, mother, that they know enough to obey the captain’s orders when they are on a cruise.”

It took some time to settle the embarking of so large a company. Philip and Gladys went in the yellow boat, taking Betty with them. Amy was ambitious to row the green boat with Sue, so Mrs. Strong at once decided to cast her lot in with that craft, thinking,

“If Amy goes to the bottom, I may as well go with her.”

Sydney took his wife and the two culprits who were being rewarded so agreeably for their sleeplessness in the canoe. Both were in their night-gowns. Faith’s serene, strong face looked a true Madonna’s

as she sat tenderly holding little Ruth "as still as a mouse" in her lap, while Madge, as quiet as another tiny white mouse, nestled between her mother's feet. Very cunning did the two curly heads look gliding along, as Sydney's strong arms shot the canoe with its precious load through the rippling water towards the upper end of the pond, where Philip had already preceded them.

The green boat made an uncertain progress in the rear. Every now and then, Amy, in her too great zeal, "caught a crab," tipping herself over on the boat, whereat there was much laughter from her and Sue, and rather anxious smiles from Mrs. Strong, who sat carefully, as if balancing the boat. Finally the green boat joined the others. Then, with suspended, dripping oars, the whole flotilla floated idly down with the current that bore gently towards the outlet.

The pond was entirely surrounded with woods. There are many acres of woodland in Plymouth still as primitive as when the Pilgrims first landed. In a few places scattered along the shore were rude huts or duck-stands, built for the use of hunters and fishers, but otherwise all was unbroken wilderness.

The woods lay dark and still beneath the glowing western sky, whose bright colors were reflected in broken, glinting fragments in the dancing waves that a delightful evening breeze sent rippling over the pond. Happily did our friends float along in the sunset glory, breathing the fresh breath of the woods. They did not sing, as usual when on the water in the evening, because it was observed that the curly heads were nodding like flowers on their stems, and that

the bright eyes were fast closing, quite against their small owners' will.

As the western radiance faded into sober gray, the moon rose, large and majestic, sending a trail of silvery brightness across the dark water. But the woods and island lay black, gloomy, impressive. There was something mysterious in the pale, uncertain light, something solitary and lonely in the mournful notes of the whippoorwill, the call of an owl from the woods, the persistent boom, boom, of the frogs, the only sounds breaking the intense stillness. It was easy to imagine Indians still lurking in the black woods, and when Sydney and Faith landed, each bearing a precious sleepy head up to bed, Amy said, in a tone almost of awe,

“I think we had best keep close to Philip, Sue.”

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE IN THE WILDWOOD.

THE excitement of the next morning for Amy was seeing the babies take their daily bath in the pond. The cottage not having all the modern conveniences, being, in fact, only a sort of camp in the wilderness, the pond was found to furnish an excellent substitute for a bath-tub. Sydney was up at five every morning to take a swim before breakfast, and the rest of the party donned bathing dresses and went into the water whenever they felt inclined. Of course, Undine's health was found to require frequent baths, and she and the china dolls were often in the pond.

The babies were taken down to a sandy, sloping beach near Breeze Point, shaded from the sun by an overhanging walnut. Never was there a prettier sight than these two cherubs in the water. They might have come right out of one of Raphael's pictures. Their curls were pinned up in Grecian knots on top of their heads, whence they escaped rebelliously in all sorts of pretty loops and tangles. Their dimpled, plump forms glistened in the water as they paddled happily about, as innocent and unconscious as two ducks. Indeed, Amy called them, —

"You two dear little ducks!"

Madge, seeing some yellow pond-lilies, waded to them, tugged stoutly at the long slimy stem until it broke, and brought the flower in triumph to Aunt Amy, sitting on the sand. Then little imitator Ruth must do the same. At last came the sad moment when they must come out of their huge bath-tub, have their backs splashed by Katie, and be swallowed up in the folds of their big bath towels.

Amy had on her bathing suit, her hair was braided tightly, and she was barefooted.

"Why, did n't you go in with the children, Amy?" asked Faith.

"Oh, I'm not going to take a bath now," said Amy. "I'm going to build a castle down here, and I dressed myself so I could wade about and work as I please."

After every one had gone, Amy had a happy time all by herself. With a strip of board for shovel she dug a canal which let the water in around the spot chosen for her castle. She worked hard, digging and tugging stones and dead tree-branches to build her castle, wading about, perfectly happy in her world of fancy, and her sense of freedom.

By and by she was startled by the splash of oars. Starting up, prepared to fly into the woods like a frightened fawn, she saw Gladys and Philip in the canoe. They had been fishing in the Cove.

"Oh, here you are," said Philip. "Did you know it was dinner time?"

"Oh, dear, is it?" said Amy. "It does n't seem possible. I hate to leave my castle, when it's almost done. Isn't it nice, Philip? It is called Castle Dangerous because it is going to be impossible for any

enemy to capture it. You see it is very strong, and then it stands up on a hill. I made that hill myself. Then it has a deep moat all around it, and I've made a real drawbridge over it. Is n't it nice?"

"Yes, it's a fine castle," said Philip, smiling as he looked at the childish structure of sand and stones in which Amy's imagination saw a stronghold of the Middle Ages. "It makes me think of Ivanhoe."

"Does n't it?" said Amy, delighted. "I meant it for one of those castles."

"Jump in and we'll take you around to the wharf," said Gladys.

Amy waded out to the canoe, but when she saw the perch Philip had caught on the bottom of the boat, she declined emphatically to get in.

"Philip!" she said reproachfully, "I don't see how you could be so cruel."

"How can we have fried perch for supper if I don't catch fish?" asked Philip.

"I would n't eat one of those poor little fish for anything," said Amy, as she started to walk home across the island.

After dinner Amy was surprised to see Gladys come out on the porch bearing Betty in her arms, Betty's head being tied up in a handkerchief.

"Betty feels the heat so," said Gladys. "She has a sick headache. I've just been putting witch-hazel on her head."

"Why, how do you know her head aches?" asked Amy.

"Her nose is dry, and her head hot, and I am sure her head must ache."

Betty's black mug and soft dark eyes looking out

from the folds of the embroidered handkerchief were so funny that every one laughed at her, and Amy said, —

“She looks exactly like a little old woman.”

Betty did not appreciate her mistress's kind attentions. She looked much ashamed, and, as soon as released, fled under the parlor sofa, soon appearing minus her bandages.

The afternoon was so very warm that Amy was glad to keep quiet, and took refuge in the Perch.

Here she amused herself by writing a story, called “Mabel's Adventure:—”

“Mabel was a very good little girl, except sometimes when she was not so good. She lived in the country with her grandmother and grandfather.

“Once in a while she was discontented with the simple way that her kind grandparents lived. In the summer, Angeline Diamond came with her papa, mamma, and governess, to the hotel at Blackville, which was the village where Mabel's home was. She was a great friend of Mabel's and they always played together, but seeing so many rich, elegant things did not agree with Mabel, because they made her discontented.

“One day, after she had been playing with Angeline all the morning, she was rather cross when she came home to a bread and milk lunch. She even said to her dear grandma (and it was very naughty of her too, I think),

““Grandma, why don't you ever have charlotte-russe, and oyster patties, and such nice things to eat, like Mrs. Diamond? Angeline has whatever she wants, and does whatever she wants, and I always have to do whatever you say. I think I should be

ever so much happier if I were Angeline. Why don't you wear a black silk dress like Mrs. Diamond?"

"But when she glanced at her grandmother and saw how tired and old she looked, she threw her arms around her, and cried, and begged her pardon.

"After lunch, still feeling unhappy, she went to the woods, which were her resort on such occasions, and began to think over her troubles, when she heard a voice. It was very weak and sad, Mabel thought, and she listened to hear what it said.

"‘I am indeed very badly off when I cannot find even a bug, and I don't care for them very much anyway, because they tickle my children's throats,’ said the first voice, for now Mabel heard two.

"She peered through the branches, and saw a little bird who was perched on a flower, talking to a stray cat.

"‘Well, friend,’" said the cat, ‘I am as badly off as you, for I can find no milk, yet yonder child,’ looking at Mabel, ‘is not satisfied with bread *and* milk too!’

"‘I know it,’ said the bird. ‘Had I but a few *crumbs* of the bread which she *rejects*’ —

"‘And I but as *small portion* of the milk she scorns,’ said the cat —’

"‘We should both be happy,’ said both together.

"So they talked, while Mabel listened till she felt so ashamed that she never wanted any one to see her again."

Just as this story with a moral had reached this highly satisfactory conclusion, Amy's attention was suddenly attracted from her writing by a great splashing in the water below. Peeping down through the branches, she was surprised to see Betty in the water

up to her neck, absorbed in trying to catch a frog. Amy was surprised because if there was anything Betty cordially detested, it was a bath. Philip often caught her and carried her out some distance in the pond, letting her swim ashore, in order to give her a bath. In her happiest moments, one had only to say, "Betty, come and get your bath," or even, "Bath, Betty," to have her tail uncurl, her ears droop, and Betty herself scamper away upstairs to hide under the bed. But now here she was in the pond of her own free will.

"Why, Betty Puggins!" exclaimed Amy.

Betty instantly scampered for shore at sound of a voice. But often when she quietly slipped away from the party on the porch, the splashing of water told that Betty was engaged in her favorite pleasure of hunting frogs, or worrying a stone as an imaginary enemy.

This day was the warmest the islanders had yet experienced. Even the breeze failed them, and towards night a plague of mosquitoes descended upon the island. Apparently all the mosquitoes in all the woods about had suddenly discovered them, and hastened to the banquet. Amy, who was wading, was driven ashore by their fierce attacks on her bare feet and ankles. In the evening she sat in the hammock with a lap robe tightly wrapped around her limbs.

"It makes me almost cool to look at Amy," said Sue. "With her lap robe she suggests sleigh riding."

"The mosquitoes persecute me the most because I wear short dresses, and they can get at me better,"

said Amy. "Please pass me the camphor bottle, Gladys."

Fans were industriously plied on the porch, and the camphor bottle circulated briskly, and yet the mosquitoes found unguarded spots.

"I feel like saying with Touchstone in the Forest of Arden, 'When I was at home, I was in a better place,' " said Mrs. Strong.

Here Philip came around from the kitchen.

"Chloe has a good idea," he said. "She is burning sweet fern in an old tin can, making a smudge, and there is n't a mosquito in the kitchen. I'm going to build a fire near the cottage, and try the virtues of a smudge here."

"I'll help you, Philip," said Amy, jumping out of her defences.

Every one welcomed this happy thought of Philip, and hastened to help him gather a high pile of dead branches and brushwood. When Philip set a match to the pile, it being very dry, as it was long since there had been a rain, the branches blazed up furiously, instead of smudging, as Philip had planned. Philip threw on more wood to smother the flames, but they only leaped more eagerly from branch to branch, higher and higher.

The fire was a success from the artistic standpoint, lighting up the dark pines around with a ruddy glare, and shining out on the water most picturesquely, and Amy danced around it, delighted.

"Oh, how wild and romantic it looks!" she cried.

But her mother surveyed the high blaze with anxiety.

“Do you think it is quite safe, Philip?” she asked. “We have had such a long drought, everything is like tinder. If this cottage *should* catch fire, it would have to burn down. No help could get to us, and we should simply have to stand and see it burn with water all around it.”

As if to emphasize these remarks, a light breeze sprang up, blowing not only the smoke, but sparks and flames towards the cottage. As they were not prepared to pay for the cottage, in case it was destroyed, they now all flew about even more energetically to extinguish the fire than they had worked to build it. Then there was no refuge but bed, where under their nets they could hear the enemy vainly humming in frantic rage around them.

The poor little babies were heard wailing all night. The next day there was no comfort for them, and after another night of mosquitoes, Sydney and Faith decided, like Touchstone, that home was a better place, especially for babies, and departed, Madge and Ruth, in their pink sun-hats, looking like tiny fairies as they sat in the canoe, swiftly gliding away across the pond. Amy was somewhat comforted in losing her little nieces, to know that she was to visit Faith and Sydney when she left the island.

By constant practice Amy had become really skilful with the oars. Often might she be seen rowing about the pond alone. One day, when she and Sue were out rowing together, they thought they would land and investigate a small sandy island, the only one beside their own in the pond. There was a little hut on it. Amy's imagination was disposed to make the most of their being in a wilderness. Sud-

denly looking back, she terrified Sue, who was gathering muscle shells, by crying, —

“A man! A man! Run, Sue, quick!”

Both girls ran to their boat, and fell into it, rowing rapidly away.

“What sort of a man was it, Amy?” asked Sue, breathlessly.

“Well, I didn’t exactly see any one,” confessed Amy, “but I thought I saw the door of the hut move a little, cautiously, you know, and it couldn’t move without some one moved it.”

“Oh,” said Sue, much relieved. “You make me think of the fright Gladys gave me when we first came here. She went over on the mainland with me, to let me sketch the island. I suppose she grew tired of staying there so long, as my sketch took a good while. I was hard at work, and Betty was peacefully sniffing about, when suddenly, apparently from the tree right over our heads, there came a strange sound, ‘Me-iew, Me-iew,’ like a great cat. I never heard anything like it before. Betty began to bark, and Gladys cried, —

“‘A wild cat!’

“You know how dramatic she can look. Her great eyes were enough to frighten me, if I hadn’t been startled before.

“‘We must save Betty!’ cried Gladys, seizing Betty and leaping into the boat.

“I was not far behind her, you may be sure. Our jumping in pushed the boat off while one of my feet was in it, and one on shore, and I had to tumble in head-first. How Gladys did laugh!”

“Was it really a wild cat?” asked Amy, her eyes quite large at this new terror of the wilderness.

"Philip said it was a cat-bird. I guess Gladys knew well enough what it was all the time."

That evening the wind changed, and a fine breeze sprang up that drove away the mosquitoes as if by magic and restored the islanders to the enjoyment of life again. After supper they rowed up the pond in the sunset glories reflected in the water, and floated down. Gladys had her violin, and Philip his guitar, and they played and sang as they drifted, the frogs and whippoorwills hearing music that would have charmed the most cultured audience. The singing was doubly effective heard thus on the water, with the twilight deepening around them. There was a fine echo somewhere off over the woods. As the tones of Gladys's voice rang out, sweet, high, clear, this echo far off over the dark, solitary woods repeated and magnified the notes, like a spirit voice in the sky chanting with her. Then Philip came in with his baritone, the different notes they sang blending in the distance in wonderful chords, like a mighty organ's diapason.

Absorbed in the music, the occupants of the yellow boat had lain luxuriously on their oars, floating along imperceptibly, never noticing that they were nearing a sand-bar, which they well knew ran out far into the pond from the Cove. Suddenly they were rudely wakened from their bliss by running aground.

"What a shame," said Amy. "We're fast on that sand-bar! I forgot all about it."

"Never mind. We can easily push off," said Sue.

Their passenger, Mrs. Strong, was not alarmed, for the excellent reason that, although they were some distance from land, her own eyes assured her that

they could easily wade ashore on the bar if the worst came to the worst.

The girls stood up and pushed with all their might, but the boat would not start. Then Mrs. Strong tried her strength in vain. Now Philip spied their plight, and came to the rescue. Sue threw their rope over to Gladys; she pulled, Philip rowed, the girls pushed, and Betty barked, and yet the boat stuck fast.

"Hullo!" came a stentorian call from the mainland.

"There's the ice," said Philip. "I must go and bring that across, and then I will come back for you. Keep perfectly still until I come back."

"We're quite safe to do that," said Sue, "for we can't stir if we want to."

It took Philip some time to get the ice, but the prisoners in the yellow boat passed the time agreeably. Amy and Sue amused themselves by calling to the echo, half awed as the great, mysterious voice, far off in the sky, solemnly repeated their foolish words.

"I feel as if we were impertinent to It," said Amy.

Then she and Sue sang, while Mrs. Strong lay back in the stern, enjoying the beauty around her. An afterglow of glory had followed the sunset, and was reflected in the water, smooth and glassy now, as the breeze had died away. The frogs began to croak, and from the forest came the sweet, melancholy notes of a wood-thrush. She was almost sorry when she saw Philip and Gladys coming back, towing the green boat.

“We must lighten your boat, before we can get it off the sand-bar,” he said.

True enough, when his mother and Sue had climbed over into the green boat, it was found easy to pull off the yellow boat with only Amy's light weight in it. She lay back in the stern, pleasing herself with her favorite fancy of being a princess of high degree, and was towed ashore in solitary grandeur.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUCKLEBERRYING.

THE islanders' chief link with the world was the iceman, or rather the iceman's horse, which at uncertain intervals, when off duty, could be hired for a consideration, with a two-seated carriage capable of carrying the whole company, Amy hardly counting. With this equipage they occasionally drove up through the woods to Plymouth.

Betty had a little red harness covered with bells bought in Paris. When this harness was taken out and shaken at her, Betty barked and bounced around with delight, well aware that some expedition was on foot. On these exciting returns to the gay world, they visited the post-office, the library, and the grocer's, little Betty in her jingling harness trotting behind them, the observed of all observers, especially among the children. The young people were sure to land at a too convenient ice-cream saloon, and also often fell into the snares of a tempting store, full of bric-a-brac souvenirs of Plymouth. Then some one must always have a new pair of tennis shoes, as rambling in the woods was fatal to shoes.

These important errands done, they drove along the shore road to the south, enjoying the quaint and ancient houses, the ocean view, and if the wind set in

the right quarter, a delicious salt breeze. Always were they haunted by memories of the Pilgrim Fathers.

They read almost nothing but Pilgrim literature. Amy was absorbed in "Betty Alden," Gladys and Sue in "Standish of Standish," Philip was reading Goodwin's "Pilgrim Republic," while Mrs. Strong was living in the graphic pages of "Mourt's Relation" until the old times seemed so real that, as she sat reading in the woods, she would have hardly been surprised to see a canoe guided by an Indian putting out from the thicket on the opposite shore, shooting swiftly across the sparkling water; or if, parting the bushes, a party of Pilgrims in pointed hats had pushed through to hunt for deer, or fish, as of old, in the pond whose plentiful stores often eked out their meagre fare.

The entire seclusion of their lives gave them a delightful sense of freedom unknown to the frequenters of summer hotels. They revelled in old clothes. In a closet was found a choice collection of old hats, so far beyond injury that they were sometimes borrowed, lending amusing masquerade effects to their costumes. Philip chopped and sawed so much wood that his hands and neck were brown as a farmer's, and his shoulders broadened until it was a question whether he would be able to get on his dress coat when he returned to it and civilization.

Amy and Sue grew hungry, plump and rosy, even if a little freckled too, and Gladys's dark eyes sparkled every day with new life, while her voice gained sweetness and strength in this free, out-door life. It was so odd, and yet so delightful, to have no

door-bell, with its constant claims on their time, their purse, or their patience ; no neighbors to be disturbed or think anything "improper ;" no carriage wheels driving by ; no sound of horse's hoof.

One afternoon Mrs. Strong was lying down, when Amy ran upstairs and into the room, looking so pale and excited that her mother was startled.

"I never was so frightened in my life !" gasped Amy.

"What is the matter ?" asked her mother, sitting up.

"Miss Williams came to call !" said Amy.

Mrs. Strong stared at Amy, bewildered. Miss Williams lived in Plymouth and was the sister of the gentleman who owned the cottage. As she was a gentle-lady, even a first call from her did not seem calculated to inspire extreme terror. Could it be that Amy had lived so long in the woods as to have become partly savage, ready to flee at the approach of "the white man ?"

But the case became clearer as Amy gained breath enough to continue her tale.

"Philip has the yellow boat out fishing somewhere. I was wading near the wharf when I saw the carriage drive up at the landing, and the driver called across to me. I ran up to the porch and called Gladys and Sue, and then I waded out to get the green boat for them. That leaks badly, but Gladys was afraid of tipping over in the canoe, when Philip was nowhere around to save her, so she had to take that. As I waded out to the green boat, there was a water-snake, close to where I had been wading ! It lay all coiled up, with its head sticking straight up ! I almost

stepped on it before I saw it. I screamed, and that startled Gladys so she hardly knew what she was about. But she and Sue managed to row over and explain the situation to Miss Williams. She had on a beautiful lace dress, so of course she could n't get into that old leaky boat. She said she would come again, and drove away. After she was gone, Gladys remembered that she had on one of those old hats. What if it was Miss Williams's sister's hat!"

"I only hope Miss Williams will not think us a sort of aborigines in earnest," said Mrs. Strong.

"I know one thing," said Amy. "I'm never going to wade in that pond again."

She kept this resolution firmly for several days until the memory of the water-snake had grown less vivid, and then returned to her favorite pleasure, which made her mother say she expected daily to see Amy become web-footed.

Glowing accounts of island life were often sent to Professor Strong, and late in July came a letter announcing his arrival the following Friday. On that morning the girls were up early and off with the boat for wild-flowers, and the parlor was put in festive array with vases, jars, pitchers, and bowls of flowers set, here, there, everywhere.

"I shall have time for a bath before father comes," said Philip.

But while he was swimming about, a shout was heard from the lower landing, where a well-known, tall form was seen.

"There's papa, now!" cried Amy, all excitement.

"Drive up to the upper landing!" shouted Philip,

putting his hands to his mouth to throw the sound across the water.

While Philip dashed in to dress, Amy and Gladys rowed the yellow boat over to the upper landing where stood the Professor, looking most correct and civilized with his valise, his fresh summer suit, and his new straw hat, but his face wearing an affectionate smile as he looked at the two slender forms so dear to him, blue-eyed Amy, black-eyed Gladys, plying the oars so briskly in their haste to greet him that the boat literally leaped along the water, and, perhaps catching some excitement from its oarswomen, tipped and wobbled about so much when the Professor was getting in, that he nearly fell down.

"It seems so odd to see you in a boat, papa," said Amy.

"Why, pray?"

"I don't know. It seems undignified — for you. I suppose it is because I never saw you in a boat before."

"I used to row on the Charles," said the Professor, "when I was at Harvard, and I do not think I have wholly forgotten how yet."

The Professor received the warmest welcome to the island, and was duly escorted around to see its beauties by the whole party. In the evening they all went rowing, the Professor, though a little clumsy at first, soon finding his old skill rapidly returning. When they returned to the camp-chairs and hammocks of the porch, Philip and Gladys gave a grand musicale in honor of his arrival, music being his delight, especially the music of his children's voices.

Professor Strong took to wildwood life with

enthusiasm, finding great pleasure in renewing recollections of his boyhood on a farm by chopping wood, in rowing and fishing, and in long walks through the woods.

One morning Philip announced at the breakfast-table, —

“Huckleberries are ripe now, and the woods over on the shore are full of bushes. Chloe says she will make a delicious huckleberry cake for supper if we will get her the berries.”

“What fun!” said Amy. “I never went huckleberrying in my life.”

“I haven’t been berrying since I was a boy,” said Professor Strong.

“We almost never see huckleberries out west,” said Mrs. Strong. “I should really enjoy picking some again.”

Gladys and Sue, like Amy, had never been berrying, and were sure it must be great fun. In short, every one welcomed Philip’s proposal with delight, and soon after breakfast the whole party set forth, leaving Chloe alone on the island. Chloe had been invited, but declined to go. She said she was “awful ’fraid o’ snakes.” When the party returned, they had a dim suspicion that, in addition to her fear of snakes, perhaps Chloe knew huckleberrying to be hard work.

Making the boats fast to bushes along shore, they scrambled up the bank, and soon came upon plenty of bushes scattered around in the woods. But the bushes were not very heavily loaded, and it takes a great many huckleberries to even cover the bottom of a large pail, to say nothing of filling it.

"Huckleberries are so very little, I get discouraged," said Amy.

"So do I, Amy," said Gladys.

"Patience and perseverance, girls," said Mrs. Strong. "But I must admit it is rather tiresome work."

"I noticed a place in the clearing over near Little Pond, where the bushes looked thick," said Philip. "Suppose we try that."

As the party straggled across the road towards Little Pond, they encountered a carriage-load of pleasure seekers from Plymouth, who stared at them freely, — as being gypsies, perhaps, or the native denizens of the forests. Mrs. Strong, who wore a faded gingham skirt and blouse, and one of the hats of the house, — an old palm-leaf with no trimming, — plunged into the nearest berry-bush, and began picking, while the girls hastened on into the depths of the woods; but Professor Strong and Philip sauntered along with easy indifference to looks. The Professor had on an old straw hat, which his head bulged up in the middle.

"Your father has rather an intellectual look, even in that hat," said Mrs. Strong. "Perhaps he saved our reputation."

"Yes, father does look as if he had seen better days," said Philip.

"Perhaps they will think we are princes and princesses in disguise, or enchanted in this wood," said Amy.

"Why, of course," said Philip. "Luckily, we don't care *very* much what they do think. Here is my clearing."

Among the stumps and decaying logs of the clearing, the bushes grew thickly, and were full of berries, but the surrounding woods shut off all breeze, while the sun, nearing the zenith, poured down its hottest rays.

"Do see Betty," said Gladys. "Naughty!"

Betty was nibbling berries from all the low bushes around.

"Perhaps the poor little thing is thirsty," said Amy. "I know I am."

"I believe my back does not bend as easily as when I was a boy," said the Professor, straightening himself with something like a groan.

"How blisteringly the sun does beat down into this hollow!" said Mrs. Strong. "What is the matter, Sue?"

"My head aches so, bending over in the heat!" said Sue, who sat on the ground in the shade of a big bush, with a flushed face, fanning herself with her hat.

Here Gladys said she felt dizzy. Philip, perceiving that his pickers were getting demoralized, suggested that they go home, and met with no opposition from any one. The welcome shades of the island had never seemed more refreshing than to-day, when the tired, heated berry-pickers dropped into chairs and hammocks on the wide, breezy porch, and drank the iced lemonade that Chloe had all ready for their return.

After this, any proposals from Philip to go berrying were met with a painful lack of enthusiasm by the ladies. They were quite satisfied to eat berries

from the Plymouth grocery, even if it were not so romantic, or the berries not so fresh as those of their own gathering. Only the Professor, with his native New England contempt of shirking anything merely because it was hard or unpleasant, was left to join Philip when he went berrying.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME HAPPENINGS.

IT took but a small event to be an excitement for the secluded islanders. One afternoon, Philip, who was out swimming, was heard to shout excitedly, as if for help. Gladys, who, although Philip was an expert swimmer, cherished an abiding fear that he would some time be drowned, dropped her book, bounded out of her hammock and to the rear of the porch in a second, followed closely by Mrs. Strong and the Professor. Philip was seen near the edge of the pond, holding up by the tail some unknown creature.

"What is it, Philip?" called Gladys. "You frightened me so!"

"I've caught a musk-rat," said Philip. "Bring down a box, some one, quick, to put him in before he bites me, as he is trying his best to do!"

A small, wooden box was found among Chloe's stores. Philip succeeded in getting the musk-rat into it, and tacked enough slats across to hold him in until they had examined him.

"We must call Sue and Amy," said Gladys. "I don't suppose they ever saw a musk-rat."

A loud "walla-walla-wah-hoo," brought the girls running from the pine-grove, and many were their

exclamations over the musk-rat, who, far from feeling flattered by the attention he was exciting, jumped frantically around, snapping furiously, and trying to bite them with his teeth, long, sharp, and fine as needles. Especially did he aim to set these teeth into Betty's paws; and there seemed every prospect of his succeeding, as Betty, wild with excitement, persisted in jumping on the box, until Gladys had to shut her up in her bed-room for safety, whence Betty could be heard loudly barking, and scratching the door in frantic efforts to get out.

"How in the world did you catch him, Philip?" asked Gladys.

"I saw him swimming out in the pond beyond me, and I kept between him and the shore until I tired him out."

"He looks like a great brown rat," said Sue.

"Yes, but with a difference," said the Professor. "Notice how thick and fine the fur is over his ears, to keep out the water; and his hind legs look as if twisted a little. That enables him to 'feather his oar' in swimming. And how thick his fur is! He is admirably fitted for his work in every way. You will have something to tell Dr. Hough when you go home, Amy."

"He will be very much interested," said Amy, "because he used to catch musk-rats himself when he was a boy. He used to catch them in traps. Poor little thing, how frightened he is! Won't you let him go, Philip?"

"Yes, now we have all seen him."

Philip took the box down beside the pond, and ripped off a slat. The musk-rat did not tarry to say

good-by, but, too tired to swim, dashed up the bank into a dense thicket of brush, where he could rest, and recover from his fright.

"I suppose he will often tell his children about his terrible adventure, falling into a great ogre's hands," said Amy, who was watching the prisoner's release from a safe distance, and looking at the affair wholly from the musk-rat's point of view.

August brought them some neighbors. One Saturday night, two families came down to camp out in some of the huts over in the woods on shore. They hung out their hammocks, and had boats of their own. It seemed strange to hear voices, and see strange boats on what the islanders had come to regard as their pond. Hitherto, except for an occasional party of fishermen, they had had it wholly to themselves. As water carries sound a long distance, although the hut at the point they had named "Red Bank" was a quarter of a mile away, they plainly heard a small child cry, and then the father, as he supposed, alone in the bosom of his family, shout out, —

"Shut up! D'ye hear me?"

"I must say I do not altogether like this," said Philip. "I feel like that backwoods pioneer who, when a man settled within a mile of him, said, 'Folks is a-gittin' too thick 'round here,' and de-camped farther on into the wilderness."

"Perhaps they will go away soon," said Gladys.

True enough, Monday morning the intruders departed; but they returned every Saturday to spend Sunday. And a club of young men came down and camped in two small huts over on the mainland,

opposite Breeze Point. Probably the huts were their own, built for a few weeks' yearly hunting and fishing. These young men gave the pond new life. They were dressed alike, in a sort of canoeing costume, and they hung out a huge sign on one of their huts — "The Manomet Club" — for the benefit of all whom it might concern. They brought three boats and a canoe.

The girls never tired of watching the canoeist, as his light bark dashed over the pond, leaving a trail of ripples behind, his wet paddles flashing in the sunlight as they dipped and rose, first one, then the other, in perfect rhythm.

"I love to see his paddles dip, dip," said Gladys, one day when they were watching him.

"Yes, it's very pretty," said Philip; "but I wish he would not dip them quite so often around our island."

For the Manomet Club had not been long in discovering that there were girls on the island, and pretty ones, too, and their business seemed to take them often in its vicinity. They were always hovering about, and one day a bold spirit landed and came up to the cottage for "a drink of water." But as every one had gone to Plymouth, he only had the pleasure of seeing Chloe for his trouble. Finding that their overtures to an acquaintance were not met cordially, the club finally subsided, and left the islanders in peace, refraining from serenading them with college songs evenings, after they happened to hear Philip and Gladys singing one evening.

Their boyish pranks and unfailing spirits often diverted the islanders, who viewed them from their

fastnesses among the trees, as if their larks were an aquatic opera; and when, at the end of two weeks, "the boys" left, the pond seemed quite lonely, even if the islanders were more free to row about it themselves.

One of Amy's pleasures since arriving on the island had been taking photographs. With her own hands she had carefully packed her camera and all her photographic apparatus in a basket, which she had brought in the cars. At first, there was trouble because there was no dark closet in which to develop her plates; but Philip came to her rescue, and fitted up a closet in an unused chamber for her. He made her a dark lantern, too, out of a cigar box, cutting one side away, and pasting red paper over it.

In this lantern Amy stuck bits of kitchen candles that Chloe was careful to save for her, by the simple process of melting one end. In return, Amy took Chloe's picture, sitting on the porch railing. Chloe's hands, spread out on her white apron, were immense in the picture, while her turbaned head, being out of focus, was somewhat vague; but her striped calico dress took finely, and Chloe was as pleased as possible with the little photograph, showing her teeth, and chuckling, as she looked at it, saying, —

"He! he! I 'spect my ole mammy 'll be tickled 'most to death with that picture."

Amy took a fascinating picture of Gladys playing her violin, a pretty one of Sue in the swing, and one of Philip leaning on his saw in the woods. Beside it, in the book were she pasted her photographs, she wrote, —

"Philip Strong, the famous piano player, singer, and wood-chopper of Billington Sea."

One fine morning Amy ran up to her dark closet with a plate, on which she had just taken a water view. When developed, it came out so clearly, and proved to be such a pretty picture, that, in her delight, she ran downstairs to show it to Gladys and Sue on the porch. Here she discovered Betty in so favorable a position for photographing, that she felt she must seize the opportunity to secure the picture of her for which she had long been trying in vain.

"Now, Miss Bettina Puggins," she said, "I do hope you will be good this time. You never will keep still when I try to take your photograph."

When all was ready, Gladys, to make Betty stick up her ears and assume her prettiest expression, said, with animation, —

"Mouse, Betty! Mouse!"

This had too great effect, for Betty not only erected her ears in her most becoming expression, but persisted in trotting and sniffing about, in search of this imaginary mouse.

"Silly, come back here!" said Gladys. "Now sit down. Keep still, naughty!"

These severe words depressed Betty's spirits so sadly, that it was necessary to try to cheer her again. It seemed impossible to get her into a satisfactory pose, and keep her there, although Gladys, Sue, and Amy were all giving their whole minds to this important task.

Mrs. Strong, meantime, who sat upstairs writing by her pleasant window that looked out into the pine-

tree branches, began to fancy she smelt something burning.

"It is probably something Chloe is doing in the kitchen," she thought. "I am always imagining fire somewhere."

But as the smoky odor seemed to increase, she decided to look about, merely to relieve her mind of its foolish fancies. In the adjoining room she found the door of Amy's dark closet open, also the window opposite, through which a good breeze was blowing.

Looking into the closet, to her horror she beheld a tongue of flame rising luridly among Amy's effects. She dashed into her own room, seized her water pitcher, threw its contents into the dark closet, and the conflagration was extinguished. But Mrs. Strong felt quite weak with fright, merely at the thought of the possibilities to the pine cottage, dry as a tinder box, had she not happened luckily to be upstairs at that moment.

Amy, on being called, confessed.

"I left the candle in the dark lantern burning, instead of blowing it out as I usually do, because I meant to come right back. But Betty looked so cunning, I forgot all about it."

The candle had burned down and set the paper on fire. That had kindled the box, and in a few moments more, perhaps, the blazing cigar-box would have lighted the dry pine boards of the closet.

"No more photography while we are on the island," said Mrs. Strong, emphatically. "This ends it. The risk is too great."

As Amy had already photographed nearly everybody and everything on or about the island, she was able

to bear up under this decision with resignation, and took up sketching with renewed interest.

One morning the wind blew from the east, bringing an invigorating salt breeze from the ocean over into the hollow where lay Billington Sea, like a bright mirror reflecting the green trees along its shore. This bracing air, the clear blue sky, the sparkling water filled the islanders with the spirit of adventure. When Philip said at the breakfast table,

“ I shall walk up to Plymouth this morning for the mail. Who wants to go with me ? ”

“ I will go.” “ And I.” “ And I,” said everybody.

They rowed down to the lower landing, and ran the boat up on the beach, where Philip chained it, to await their return. Then they took the Corduroy Path for Plymouth with that peculiarly valiant, independent feeling people are apt to enjoy when relying on their own unaided efforts.

The Corduroy Path follows the Town Brook closely through the woods. Part of the way it lies through a cedar swamp, and here it is made of small logs laid across the path, like a genuine corduroy road. Hence its name. A prettier path was never seen. It winds along under the trees which meet in a dense arch overhead, through which the sun glimmers but fitfully, now and then. Each way our pilgrims looked down its cool green vistas into the heart of the woods, or caught glimpses of the historic brook on whose brown surface floated lily pads, while in its clear mirror were reflected the arrow-shaped leaves of aquatic plants, or the brilliant blue dragon-flies darting lightly over the water.

"Amy looks as if she might be the fairy that haunts these woods," said Gladys, glancing down the path where, far ahead, framed in by the green arch of the bending boughs, Amy's slender form with the floating golden hair glided lightly along, followed closely by Betty in her bright red harness and jingling bells.

"And Betty might be the enchanted prince held captive by the fairy," said Sue.

"Amy is a sort of fairy princess, I sometimes think," said Mrs. Strong, her eyes lovingly following the little girl who was the sunshine of her life.

"We may please ourselves by thinking that we are now literally walking in the footsteps of the Pilgrims," said Professor Strong. "The shore of this brook must have been their usual road to the pond, where we are told they often came to fish, or hunt deer. Miles Standish, Winslow, Bradford, and the rest must often have traversed this very ground."

"And Massasoit and Samoset too," said Philip. "I read somewhere recently that the present road from the village to the pond follows the old Indian trail. The Indians fished in this brook and pond, and hunted in these woods, long before a white man set foot here."

So pleasant were their surroundings that the pilgrims did not hurry, but often sat down to rest and chat, breathing in the damp, pungent odor of the woods, a mingling of pine and fern and cedar and mouldering dead leaves. Skirting the shore of Little Pond, which would be a "gem of purest ray serene" anywhere but in Plymouth, where beautiful ponds are so common, they came at last out of the cool

shade of the woods and the imagined company of Puritans and Indians upon the dusty highway, into the glaring sunlight and the realities of every-day life.

They closed ranks, ceased their aimless sauntering, assumed the hurried, busy step of their busy age, and went to the post-office, the butcher's, the baker's, and candlestick-maker's. The necessary errands done, they turned their steps up Burial Hill, which they had not yet visited.

The older folk, as they slowly climbed the steep ascent, could but think of the many aching hearts that had toiled up this same path. Along the grassy hillside leaned thickly the old black slate gravestones with their quaint inscriptions. What agony, what heartbreak, when the fresh sod was broken for these graves! And now how quietly sleep both the mourner and the mourned, alike forgotten, while the careless foot of the sight-seer perchance wears a footpath across their graves, unconscious of the precious dust below. And yet — this is not all.

“Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives ;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.”

Our friends tried to ignore the present, blot out the village of to-day, and see in fancy only the pitiful little cluster of huts at the foot of Leyden Street near the place of landing, and on this hill the rude “First Church,” which was fort too, the ordnance on its top commanding not only steep Leyden Street to the sea, but the country all around.

Before them lay the harbor where the Mayflower dropped anchor at last, after her long, weary voyage. To the left rose Captain's Hill, where valiant Miles Standish made his home. Farther out in the bay they saw the small island where the Pilgrim records tell us "on the Sabbath-day wee rested," and where they held the first religious service ever held in New England. Saquish, the Gurnet, and the long strip of Plymouth beach broke into the deep blue of the water; and, the day being so clear and brilliant, they could see distinctly a dim, yellowish semicircle stretching far around to the right, dividing the blue of sea and sky, which they knew to be Cape Cod.

The view was beautiful in itself, and full of the most deeply interesting associations, when they realized that here below — one little spot of civilization on the eastern edge of the vast wilderness — was the amphitheatre where the Pilgrims played their part, and made the brave struggle destined to leave so deep and lasting an impress on a great nation yet unborn.

"The Pilgrims certainly had a goodly heritage," said Professor Strong, as he looked around on the beautiful landscape.

"I cannot help thinking of the Puritan women," said Mrs. Strong, "how some of them may have stood where we do now, with hearts full of homesick longing, watching the Mayflower, their only link with civilization, sail out of this harbor. Their hearts must have sunk within them as her sails disappeared at last in the distance; yet they did not flinch. To my mind, one of the most suggestive things recorded of the Pilgrims is the fact that, after that

terrible first winter of sickness, hardship, death, not one of the survivors returned in the *Mayflower*. What resolution they had, what unwavering steadfastness, what firm religious trust!"

"I believe there are people to-day who would do the same thing if they were put to the test," said Gladys.

"Gladys," said Sue, "did you know that Mrs. Stearns keeps the prettiest souvenir teacups at her store? Some have the *Mayflower* on them, and some Plymouth Rock, with the landing of the Pilgrims."

"I hope, mamma," said Amy, "that you will be sure to buy me a Plymouth souvenir spoon before we go away. I want one of those with Plymouth Rock on the handle."

"To such base uses have the Pilgrim Fathers come at last," said the Professor, rather grimly, as he declined the offer of a boy with a satchel who seemed to frequent the graveyard expressly to waylay unsuspecting strangers, and who pressed upon the Professor penholders with peepholes in the handles wherein one might see the Pilgrim monument, the Rock, or other objects of local interest.

This invasion of the nineteenth century effectually destroyed the illusions of the historic past, and especially disgusted the Professor, who read aloud with evident relish the inscription on the headstone of Mistress Tabitha Plasket, composed by herself:—

"Adieu, vain world; I've seen enough of thee!
And I am careless what thou say'st of me.
Thy smiles I wish not,
Nor thy frowns I fear;
I am at rest, my head lies quiet here."

“I fancy that vigorous Mistress Plasket would be moved to drive the ‘vain world’ off Burial Hill, if she could return,” said Philip. “She used to keep a dame school in her own house, spinning as she taught, and if any of her pupils misbehaved she hung them up on the wall by skeins of yarn under their arms. Sometimes she had a whole row suspended at one time. How should you have enjoyed that, Amy?”

“It must have been very funny,” said Amy. “But I should think the boys would have kicked each other.”

“Probably they did,” said Philip, “as boys were boys then as much as now. But I imagine they were extremely careful to do it when Mistress Plasket’s back was turned, as she no doubt had a fine bunch of rods handy, and no scruples about using it when needed.”

“Not only no scruples, but she doubtless felt it her most imperative duty not to ‘spare the rod,’” said the Professor. “Whipping was held in high esteem in that age, and the Puritan laws often condemned culprits to be ‘severely whipt’ for slight offences.”

“I’m very glad I did not live then,” said Amy.

But even Amy was not too young to appreciate the Pilgrim spirit, and to feel the influence of her surroundings, for the next day, Sunday, while her father and mother were gone to church, she sat up in the Perch and wrote this poem: —

I am cast on a desolate island,
Out in a lonesome sea,
And over on the mainland
Is nothing but tree upon tree.

I hear the whippoorwill singing
As he builds his nest on high,
And can see the wild-geese winging
Their way through the cloudless sky.

Oh, Pilgrims, oh, Puritan Fathers,
I can fancy I see you still,
Toiling away in the wilderness,
With no support but your will.

You have started a wondrous nation,
A nation strong and free,
And have caused the Indian sachem
To wilder haunts to flee.

And now before I finish
This peregrination wild,
Let us ask you to leave as an heirloom
Your disposition mild,

Which we may in time inherit
Throughout this blessed land,
And then we may to our merit
Be as children, hand in hand.

Below the poem was a picture of a group of children, hand in hand, dancing gaily.

"I know the last two verses are not very good," said Amy. "I was tired of writing, and finished it off anyway. I could n't express my ideas exactly. I did n't think the Pilgrims ought to be called 'mild,' but I had to say so, to rhyme with 'wild.'"

Her parents read the poem with fond admiration, which they were careful not to express strongly before Amy, lest she lose her sweet naturalness, and become that most disagreeable creature, a self-conscious, priggish child.

CHAPTER XV.

A FEW LETTERS.

IN the quiet of island life, the arrival of the mail was always an event of interest. When the ice-man's horse could not be had, the men often walked up to Plymouth for it, but, as this was not always convenient, sometimes it happened that two or three days passed without any communications from the outside world.

It was after one of these intervals that the other islanders were sitting on the porch impatiently watching for the return of Gladys and Philip, who had walked up for the mail.

Betty, much against her will, had been left behind. It was touching to see her run around the house hunting for Gladys, even standing up on her hind-legs to look on the beds, in the vain hope that there she should discover her dear mistress. Satisfied at last that it was useless to look farther, she seemed to have adopted Mrs. Strong as her mistress *pro tem.* and was now lying on the folds of that lady's skirt on the floor, as close to her as she could get. Suddenly she leaped up, erected her ears quivering with eagerness, gave one sharp, short bark of joy, and dashed down to the wharf.

"They must be coming," said Mrs. Strong.

"I don't hear the slightest sound," said the Professor.

"Betty certainly hears them," said Mrs. Strong.

"She always hears Gladys's voice before any one else does," said Sue.

Now they too heard, far off in the woods, the unmistakable notes of Gladys's voice singing. Gladys's voice had great carrying quality. The man from whom they bought vegetables, who lived on a clearing in the woods about a mile from the pond, said to Philip one day,—

"I admire to hear your wife sing."

"Why, where did you ever hear her?" asked Philip, surprised.

"I always set out doors evenin's and smoke my pipe, and listen to her. She beats the robins holler, I tell you."

So, although they plainly heard Gladys's sweet notes, it was still some time before she and Philip were seen to come out of the woods at the lower landing and get into the canoe.

The whole company went down to meet them on the little wharf, where the national flag on the miniature flag-staff was fluttering bravely over Betty running wildly up and down, barking and whining. Amy was almost as excited as Betty, especially when, as the canoe drew nearer, Gladys held up a handful of letters, calling,—

"Three for you, Amy."

Betty now showed plainly that an animal reasons, though not always wisely. In her impatience to reach her mistress she ran down and leaped into the yellow boat, which was tied at the wharf. She knew

that boats went out on the water, and evidently reasoned in her little mind,—

“If I get into the boat, it will take me out to Gladys.”

But, as Betty could not handle the oars, the boat did not stir, and she had to content herself by standing up in it on her hind-legs, barking frantically, until the canoe grazed the sand, when she darted to Gladys and was rewarded for her devotion by being taken up at once.

“Come here, this minute, little Tender Heart and Patter Foot,” said Gladys.

Betty looked so satisfied in her mistress’s arms. When we see the faithful love of dogs and horses for their masters, the almost soul that looks longingly out of their eyes, we must wonder how they can ever be roughly treated and abused. But some men abuse not only helpless animals, but women and little children. It takes all sorts of people to make a world, we are told, and some of the varieties are but sorry specimens.

“Oh, mamma!” cried Amy, as she fell upon the letters that Gladys outheld, “only think, I have a letter from Irene, and one from Kitty, and *such* a fat one from Laura! Did you ever hear of such good luck?”

But all were deep in their own letters, and the Professor lost to view in the folds of a three days’ old Cincinnati paper. Amy found she must wait a while for interest and sympathy in her own precious letters, and plunged into the enjoyment of them without further delay.

Irene’s letter was mailed at Evansville, Indiana, and dated,—

U. S. STEAMER GOLDEN ROD, Aug. 7.

DEAR AMY, —I have gone with papa and Zelia for a two weeks' cruise on the light-house tender, "Golden Rod." We have had a delightful trip, and I feel very sorry that I shall have to be in Cincinnati so soon. But it seems so queer to be away from mamma. It is the first time I have ever been separated from her.

The scenery is simply perfect along the river; the sloping banks generally of rocks and boulders, the trees beyond, hung with vines, which form archways of leaves, and the wooded hills beyond forming the background.

I think it was the third night out that we spent at Empire Landing, a beautiful place. The cliffs rose at least a hundred feet above us, perpendicularly. We spent the next night at Louisville, and Zelia and I went ashore. It is a beautiful city. The houses are all huge, old fashioned, Southern houses. We took a street-car ride to Jacob Park. They have the funniest arrangement for paying you ever saw. There is a hollow brass rod that extends around the car, with places to drop the change in, and it (I mean the change!) slides down to the motor-man who takes it.

The next morning we went through the locks around the Louisville Falls, and enjoyed it immensely. We passed Leavenworth, Indiana, where Wyandotte Cave is. I hope we can visit it going back. Shawneetown is a very funny place. It is below the level of the water, and of course is protected by dikes. The pigs run loose in the streets, and it looked so gloomy and dirty that I never want to go there again.

We went as far as Cairo, and saw the Mississippi River. It was very peculiar what a distinct line there was between the water of the Mississippi, and the Ohio, the former was so much muddier. After stopping a short time at Cairo for the mail, we returned to Paducah where we got our pilot for the Tennessee River. On the Tennessee the scenery was very wild and beautiful. One time we went nearly fifty miles without seeing a sign of human habitation. The borders of the river

are mostly covered with dense woods, and once in a while we could see a snake crawling along the shore, or swimming in the water. There were a great many turtles, and it was very interesting to watch them.

We stopped at Pittsburg Landing where the famous battle of Shiloh was fought. We went all through the cemetery, where thousands of the Union soldiers are buried, and more than half are unknown dead. We could see the remains of camping utensils, and some of the trees were simply imbedded with bullets. It was very interesting to see the house where Grant was staying, when the news of the Southerners' attack on Shiloh was made known to him. And I could almost imagine I saw the boats on the river laden with soldiers, and heard the roar of the distant artillery.

It is very amusing to see the different country people. They are very interesting. There is a lightkeeper who is very rich, and yet he does n't wear shoes. He is Scotch, and lived near Burns in his childhood. He quoted poetry off by yards, and it was very interesting to hear him.

When we arrived at Paducah, there was great excitement on the wharf-boat. A colored man had fallen overboard in the morning, while drunk, and the people were busy trying to haul him up. I could only see one black clenched hand. It was enough!!!

We have had the moon nearly every evening. Zelia found in her water this morning a small catfish, about so _____ long. You know they grow to be six and seven feet in length. I am going to keep it, and if anybody finds any more, I'm going to have them too.

I am very anxious to hear all you are doing at Plymouth, so write soon and tell me all about it. Your chickens all seemed very happy when I left home. I played dolls some, after you left, out under the trees. I had two starch boxes for the house, and moved out lots of furniture, and pretended they were camping out. I called the camp "The Maples." And I made Emily De Vere two of the sweetest dresses.

I wish to mail this letter at Evansville, and we are nearly there now, so I must close. Write soon.

Ever your loving friend,

IRENE BROWNELL.

"What a perfectly splendid time she is having," said Amy, when she had read this letter with the deepest interest. "It's almost equal to being on an island."

In Irene's letter were enclosed two little ones, in tiny envelopes made by Irene herself, for two of Amy's dolls, for their dolls were carrying on as active a correspondence this summer as their mammas. One was addressed to "Lady Clinton," the other to "Lady Spirendoff, Care of Count Spirendoff, Billington Sea."

Lady Clinton's letter proved to be from the bride who had figured at the last wedding in the attic, Blanche Deloraine Stevenson, and told what a delightful summer the newly wedded pair were having at "The Maples." The other was from the bride's mother, Madame Marguerite Vanderbird Deloraine, and assured Lady Spirendoff, "I cannot tell you how much we miss your society," and in conclusion stated,—

"Our address is 'The Maples,' Whitefield, N. H. We are ten miles from any village, and are simply camping out and having fun."

Both these letters were certainly enjoyed by Amy, and probably by Ladies Clinton and Spirendoff, as they might have been seen standing bolt upright on the lower shelf of the washstand in Mrs. Strong's room, stiffly holding these letters in their china hands, by day and night, for several days.

Kitty, as has been hinted, was more fond of active play than of reading and writing. Her letter, though the shortest of the three, was quite to the point.

NEW CARLISLE, OHIO, Aug. 8th.

MY DEAR AMY,—I received your letter just as I came back from horseback-riding last Wednesday evening. Mollie Foster was on the saddle, and I behind her right on the backbone of the horse, with my feet hanging down. I was so stiff I could hardly walk after we were through riding. I was rather mad when I did not get an answer from you. I thought I would never write to you again, and I would make you wait as long as I have waited, but I changed my mind. I will forgive you for not writing sooner this time. Let us write to each other often, we are such dear friends. I will write on Thursdays, and you will answer on Sunday, and in that way we will hear from each other often. Yesterday I received a letter from Frida Goldschmidt. She says that she is taking swimming lessons in the Ohio River.

The other day Mr. Howard had sheep's wool packed in large sacks. Albert Keiser, Peter Poor, Eddie Grover, Mollie Foster, Bessie Willis, Rob and I played tag on the sacks, and had lots of fun. Then Mollie and Bessie and I washed their pony. We had lots of fun doing it, as she did n't mind it at all. That evening we rode her. That is the evening I was sitting on the backbone. I am lame yet from that ride.

I had a letter from Irene last week. She says Billy, Dr. Trimble's dog, was poisoned and died. Irene was going away for a two weeks' trip on her father's steamer. I am taking a play from a story. When I get it copied, I will send it to you to see if it is all right. The other day I held a dollar in my hand that was made in the year ——1767 ——! Just think of that! Four of us are going out to visit a lady who invited us to a "Grape Feast." Mollie Foster in the saddle, Rob behind her, Bessie Willis on the side-saddle, and I behind her. That's the way we are going to ride out to the place.

I must tell you about our picnic last week. We had a lovely time. I will tell you what we had to eat. Eight cakes (we ate seven of them for dinner, and saved one for supper), six glasses of jelly, three different kinds of ham, eggs pickled, hard-boiled, and stuffed. Then we had about a hundred different kinds of sandwiches, and pickles, pickled cauliflower, chow chow, jam, and everything you could imagine to eat. There was not a thing left when we came home. There were fourteen of us children, and four grown people to take care of us. We had a lovely time. There were some campers there. They were very pleasant.

I have so much to say to you that I do not know where to stop. But I must stop now, for dinner is about ready, and the hungry bears are waiting ready for it. Write soon, very soon.

Your most loving friend,

KITTY CLOVER.

Rob enclosed a short note in his sister's letter.

DEAR AMY, — I like it up here first rate. We have lots of fun doing things. We ride on our bicycles everywhere about. What kind of a Roman candle is it that you stick in the ground, and you light it, and it whistles? Well, we had a lawn fête here, and we had some of those, and other fireworks, and I had lots of fun, sending them up phizzing. We went to a picnic last week with eight cakes, and they were all eaten up.

What do you think about me driving a cow? I get fifty cents a month, and must get up every morning at six to go. I have not stopped yet, but am awful sleepy sometimes. I am saving up my money, for the circus is coming, and all the boys are going. Ain't you glad it is a long time till school begins? I know I am. Well, good-by.

Your true friend,

ROB CLOVER.

When Mr. Howard's pears are ripe, we can eat all we can. I am going fishing to-morrow.

"I guess Kitty and Rob are having as much fun as anybody," said Amy, after finishing these letters.

"I don't doubt it," said her mother.

Laura's fat letter was saved to the last. It was dated,

WELLER'S GROVE, STONE LAKE, LA PORTE IND., Aug. 8th.

MY DEAR, SWEET SISTER AMY,— We did not start Friday as we expected, but waited until Monday. We said good-by to our darling kittens and cat, and Mr. Dwight (the man who is going to be in our house while we are away), and rode down town in the carriage with Kate (our horse); Uncle Alfred has her for the summer. When we got into the train it was about eight o'clock. We rode, and rode, and on both sides, after we got into Indiana, we saw field after field of wheat bundled up in sheaves, and field after field of corn, and a great many fields of oats. The fields of oats looked so soft and lovely, I just longed to jump into them. I got so tired of seeing the fields of wheat, wheat, wheat, and wheat. There was more wheat than anything else.

We reached Indianapolis about noon, and had our lunch there. Then we walked over and saw the State House, but did not have time to go inside. Oh, it was so hot in Indianapolis! All the way to La Porte we saw wheat, corn, and oats. When we finally reached La Porte we took a carriage and rode and rode till we came to Weller's Grove. We have rooms in a cottage. The boarders are mostly in the cottages. The dining-room and parlors are in the hotel.

The first morning, I was just coming down the steps of the hotel porch, when a lady who had been talking to mamma asked me if I knew any of the children. I answered No. So she took me and introduced me to her son, Willie Archer, and to another boy, Frank Richards, and a girl, Fanny Frazier. I don't like Frank at all, but Willie is just lovely! Fanny

took me down to see the lake, for you know we are right on Stone Lake.

In the afternoon we all went in bathing, papa and Mr. Archer (he is a minister), Fanny, Maggie, and I. Maggie is a real nice little girl that Fanny introduced me to. She sits at our table. Papa gave us a lesson in swimming, and it was more fun! We stayed in twenty minutes. Mamma sat on the shore with Violet, and told us when the twenty minutes were up. When we were all dressed, mamma, papa, and Violet sat in the shade of the trees, while Lansing and I took a short row near the shore.

The other night we danced in the pavilion, and had lots of fun. The pavilion is a floor roofed over, with canvas curtains hung up around the edges. There are seats, and camp chairs, and a piano there. I dance with Maggie more than anybody else. Every Friday night they have some entertainment.

Willie Archer is a very nice little boy. I like him ever so much! I don't know how old he is, but he is about my size. He just loves little babies, and is so sweet to them. He will take one up in his arms even in front of lots of other boys, and hug it. The babies love him! He is always ready to 'lend a hand' to everybody and anybody. I don't know how many times I have seen him get up and give his seat to a girl.

Oh! we will have lots of fun to-night dancing. I! just! love! to! dance!!

To-day a snake ran right over a boy's foot when he was walking in the grass. It was killed and I saw it! There is a lovely rope swing here, and a croquet set. You must be having a lovely time. Please write soon, and tell me about your trip, and all you've been doing, just as I have done. Good-by, my dear sister, with love, from

LAURA.

P. S. The other day we took a ride on a little steamer called the "Emerald." We rode over into Pine Lake (right near Stone Lake), through a channel under a dear little

bridge. We had a lovely time. This morning we took a drive. We had a span of horses, and papa drove. We came to a graveyard, and while the rest went in to see it, I stopped outside the fence to pick daisies. They grew wild all along the road, and on the other side the fence there were, oh! ever so many! The field was just white with them. I picked a great bunch. We stopped at another place to gather lots of wild roses, and I trimmed the horses up with pear leaves (they were so shiny and pretty) and little bits of daisies. But they would persist in pulling them off each other and eating them. We got a small willow branch and made a whistle. We came home loaded with flowers, and quite jolly.

I will write again when I get up to Michigan. I am very anxious to see our cottage. Only think, yesterday I missed my Brightside Club badge, and could not find it anywhere! Mamma found it in the bath-house. I am so glad! But mercy! I forgot this was only a postscript! So good-by again. I will see you to-night in Our Land.

P. S. No. 2. As we go to Michigan next week, address me at Bellevue, Charlevoix, Michigan. I should have answered your letter sooner, but I have been so busy storekeeping!! I will tell you what I mean by storekeeping. Some children here got up a store in which they sold stones for pins. They had a way of polishing them, but would not tell how. They also sold colored water, but would not tell how they made it. They had yellow, blue, and red water (a lovely yellow!). A great many children have taken it up, and so did I, and that's what I meant by storekeeping. I long to see you.—But I must really stop now.

From your loving twin-sister.

In Laura's letter was enclosed a small package, inscribed, "Look in this after you've read the letter." In it Amy found, carefully done up, a pressed ox-eye daisy.

"Well, that is a letter," said Amy, with a sigh of

satisfaction, as she folded Laura's voluminous pages. "Hearing from the girls almost makes me in a hurry to go home, we do have so much fun together."

She denied herself the joys of wading and rowing to write suitable replies to the girls, letters wherein the water-snake figured fully as large as life. They were illustrated by many sketches of Amy wading or rowing, and contained photographs of the pond and cottage, taken by the dollar camera.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RAINY BIRTHDAY.

IT was felt to be pleasant that Professor Strong's birthday should happen to come when so many of his family were together on the pleasant island. Amy, always enthusiastic about birthdays, was full of plans to celebrate the day, and rose early to go for flowers to decorate the breakfast-table. Alas, it was raining, a melancholy drizzle, drizzle. But Amy had lived a wildwood life long enough not to be dismayed at a little rain; she put on her bathing-suit and rubber boots, and quietly slipped downstairs and out doors. There was a delightful sense of freedom in rambling through the woods, feeling that she need not think of her clothes, but was, for the time, a part of nature,—one with the birds and the wet boughs swaying in the northeast wind. The woods were dark and cool, and full of damp odors of fallen leaves and wet ferns, and from the covert of pine and hemlock the birds sang rejoicingly.

"I didn't know a rainy day could be so pleasant," thought Amy. She found a few late lingering wild roses and elder-berry blooms along the shore, and on the point just beyond the Cove were some new flowers coming into bloom, blossoms that were strange to her. When her father sat down to breakfast, he

was surprised to find a really beautiful bouquet blooming beside his plate, a loving tribute from his little daughter that pleased him much.

"Amy looks as blooming as a wild rose herself, after her ramble in the rain," said Philip.

"I am afraid I should not have consented to let you go out in the rain, had I been consulted, Amy," said her mother.

"You were fast asleep, mamma, and I did not want to disturb you," said Amy. "I fixed myself so it did not do me a bit of harm. I was determined to have some flowers for papa's birthday. I found out something I never knew before. A rainy day is the pleasantest time in the woods. I want to go again after breakfast."

"We have learned since we came here to pay no attention to the weather," said Philip. "We go out, rain or shine, and I believe that is the healthiest way."

"This island lies so high, and its soil is so rocky and sandy," said Gladys, "that it is never muddy. It is dry as soon as the rain stops."

After breakfast the whole party in fact, suitably dressed in short dresses and waterproofs, took to the woods, and rambled about at will, agreeing with Amy on the pleasantness of a rainy day in the woods. From the farther end of the island the sound of chopping drew Mrs. Strong in that direction. She found her husband, in his working-suit, valiantly attacking a huge dead tree doomed to firewood, while Philip was cutting to pieces another felled the day before.

"Daniel, you are a second Gladstone," said Mrs. Strong.

The Professor smiled, swung his axe aloft for another sturdy blow, and said, —

“I find I have n’t forgotten how to handle an axe. I don’t see but that I can chop as well as I did forty years ago.”

Amy, who was breaking off dead branches laden with long gray moss from an old tree near by, to ornament the parlor, said, —

“Papa, you oughtn’t to work so hard on your birthday. What you do on your birthday is a sign of what you will do all that year.”

“I ask nothing better than work,” said her father.

Mrs. Strong rambled on to find Gladys and Sue in the pine grove. The northeast wind blew white fog in drifts across the pond and along the woodside, giving the familiar scene a strange, wild look. The water was cold and gray, blown by the wind in long waves that broke grandly on the beach on the stormy side of the island. But on the lee side, the water lay quiet and still; and in the pine grove’s shelter the air was warm, the drizzling rain scarcely penetrated, and the odor of wet pine needles was delightful.

Mrs. Strong drew in long, deep breaths of this aromatic air.

“How like the very quintessence of Massachusetts this air is!” she said. “I only wish I could take some of it home to Ohio.”

“Pine air is very good for the voice,” said Gladys. “Philip has promised to make me a couch out here in the pine grove, because he thinks it will do me good to take my naps out here.”

“We shall get, by and by, so we shall not want to

stay in the house at all," said Sue. "I really dread going back to the city."

"We shut ourselves up in houses too much," said Mrs. Strong.

But this enthusiasm for out-door life abated in the afternoon, when the nor'easter, which had only been trifling so far, now set out to show its power in earnest. The rain drove in white sheets that hid the opposite shores, and beat violently against the frail summer cottage. The cottage, dry from a long drought, developed leaks in the most unexpected places. There was a great running about with tubs, pails, and washbowls to catch the drippings through the leaks which threatened to deluge even the beds.

The Professor, stretched on a sea-chair in the parlor, read library books and day before yesterday's "Boston Advertiser." Philip went fishing. Mrs. Strong, in her own room, as the rain pounded on the roof over her head, and dripped into the washbowl on her bed, wrote an "adjective story" for the grand celebration of her husband's birthday, to come in the evening.

In the adjoining room, through the thin partition, she could hear the happy voices of Gladys, Sue, and Amy, chattering gaily. Gladys and Sue had turned themselves into children for the nonce, and were helping Amy dress her china dolls in unspeakable magnificence, in preparation for a grand court reception soon to be given. These august doings were evidently much retarded by Betty's determination to be in the midst of it all, she getting on the very choicest materials on the bed, even the Countess Compositici's court train.

"Naughty!" said Gladys's voice, with what was meant for terrifying sternness; "How often have I told you you must *not* lie on that velvet? I will put you out."

The door opened, and the small culprit was dumped in the hall outside. Her ears hung down with discontent until, spying Mrs. Strong, she took refuge on her dress, and went fast asleep.

As the rainy day darkened early into night, sufficient dampness penetrated the cottage to convince Philip that it was best to make a fire in the great brick fireplace built across one corner of the parlor. This being the first time a fire had been needed, it was a pleasant event. The bushes and branches that decorated the fireplace were cleared away, and soon a bright fire of logs and big sticks, the fruits of Philip's and his father's industry, was blazing cheerfully, transforming the parlor with its ruddy glow.

Chloe, in honor of the birthday, had prepared unexpected dainties for supper, and made some ice-cream, which Philip had frozen, aided towards the last by Amy and Gladys.

"We wait till the ice-cream is nearly frozen," Amy confided to her mother, "and then we go and offer to help Philip, because then he has to scrape it down, and it is tasting time."

After supper, the little company gathered around their open fire, ready for the pleasures of the evening. A piano being absolutely necessary to Gladys and Philip, one had been hired in Plymouth, and, not without some misgivings on its owner's part, taken across to the island by placing two of its legs in one boat, two in another, and thus rowing it over.

The parlor was not unlike a ship's cabin. It was fitted up with lockers and cupboards in all sorts of nooks and unlooked for places, and in the corner opposite the fireplace an open stairway ascended to the upper deck, so to speak. Gladys had brightened its unplastered walls with Japanese banners, scarfs, and hangings. But against the uncurtained windows the storm beat wildly, and through them the ruddy light of the warm, cosy interior streamed out into the dark night.

The evening's entertainment opened with the reading of Mrs. Strong's adjective story. An adjective story being written solely for a bit of amusement, many local allusions are introduced, and especially the names of the persons who are to hear it read. Blanks are left to insert numerous adjectives and adverbs. The audience, who are in ignorance of the story, are requested to furnish adjectives in turn, which the author writes down impartially, just as they come.

When Mrs. Strong called for adjectives, Amy gave "horrible," Sue, "sweet," Philip, "good," Gladys, "fascinating," Professor Strong, "venerable," Amy, "bow-legged," Sue, "terrific," and so on, Mrs. Strong inserting them as given, with an occasional smile that caused Amy to say, —

"Mamma is having all the fun to herself."

"I am ready now to share it with the rest of you," said her mother.

Philip had several times reported seeing a huge turtle in the pond, which he had tried in vain to capture. The wily old fellow always managed to elude him. Each time Philip saw this turtle, he seemed to in-

crease in size, at least in Philip's descriptions, until the cottagers affected to regard him as a rival to the sea serpent.

A portion of Mrs. Strong's adjective story is here given, the words furnished by her audience being italicized. It was called, —

“THE *HORRIBLE* FISHERMAN OF BILLINGTON SEA.

A TALE OF WHAT DID NOT HAPPEN.

“In the *sweet* town of Plymouth lies the *good* pond known as Billington Sea. Out in its *fascinating* depths is a *venerable* island, destined to be hereafter famous, owing to the *bow-legged* party who, during the *terrific* summer of —, occupied the *rare* residence that crowns the island's *pigeon-toed* heights. Here in the *sunny* month of August, were *merrily* assembled the *sarcastic* Professor Strong, his *beautiful* wife, the *grateful* singer and *charming* soprano, Madame Gladys Van Dyke Strong, her *cross-eyed* sister, the *æsthetic* Sue Van Dyke, her *terrible* husband, the *spiteful* baritone, Philip Strong, her *sensitive* sister-in-law, the *grand* poetess, Amy Strong, and her *cork-legged* pug, the *angry* Bettina Puggins. Last, but far from least, the *spindle-shanked* cook, Chloe Jackson, was the *lovely* rock and *Titian-hued* foundation on which rested the happiness of this *bewitching* party. The *anxious* Williamses far away were forgotten, and the *excruciating* Stronges and *carboniferous* Van Dykes ruled *hardly* over the *ethereal* island.

“One *golden* morning the two *inferior* Mr. Stronges resolved to *gingerly* go a-fishing. They *scarcely*

rowed to the *ambitious* Cove. On its *proud* shore sat the two *long* artists, making *explosive* sketches of the *haughty* landscape. At the *superlative* cottage, the *blue* Gladys was practising an *extreme* song, while *princely* Betty sat howling on the *spirited* pier, and Amy, with her *spirituelle* feet much in evidence, was *delicately* wading in the *pungent* pond. Professor Strong threw in his *constant* line, and soon *easily* drew out a *pink* perch, while his *fat* son *generously* landed a *serene* catfish. As they were enjoying themselves in this *fiendish* manner, suddenly the *faint* boat tipped *demurely*. Startled, the *contiguous* fishermen looked *tastefully* around, and Philip cried *sensitively*, —

“ ‘ That *fascinating* turtle is upon us ! ’ ”

“ This *tragic* monster of the *authentic* Billington deep *successfully* reared his *serpentine* form from the *perfect* water, reaching his *green* claw for the *amazing* fishermen who were so *roguishly* emptying the *characteristic* pond of its *dim* denizens. With a *brown* shriek, they raised the *truthful* oars, and fought *quickly* for their *graceful* lives.

“ *Mildewed* screams from the *sour* artists drew *large* Gladys, *sad* Amy, and *affectionate* Betty to the *mild* spot. *Softly* did the *pensive* Betty plunge into the *sharp* water, seize the *crazy* monster by the *careful* tail, and drag him *grumbling* on shore, where the *astounding* Amy grasped him, and held him, while *skinny* Gladys *awkwardly* killed him with Mrs. Strong’s *knock-kneed* penknife. Chloe, the *freckled* cook, made a *superb* soup from this *handsome* turtle.”

Afterwards, details were given of a “ *shining* reception and *fiendish* musicale,” given to celebrate this

victory, where "the *jolly* piano was at its *thickest*, as the *amphibious* ladies entered the *insidious* salon, led by Madame Van Dyke Strong, her *best* eyes flashing *mutinously*."

It takes but little to amuse people who are ready to be pleased, so this adjective story caused much laughter and fun. Then, reversing the usual order, they passed from the ridiculous to the sublime, under the spell of the duet from "The Star of the North," magnificently sung by Gladys and Philip. Then Gladys sang an aria from "Dinorah."

The unplastered boards of the cottage rang with the exquisite melody that had enraptured Paris salons. The beautiful singer, who had entranced great audiences all over the country by the magic of her voice and her rare personal charm, was never more fascinating than now when, for love's sake only, she threw her whole soul into this singing for a handful of folk in the simple cottage. Professor Strong might well feel that "his birthday was receiving royal celebration."

Then Philip sang a solo from the "Elijah," and afterwards, at Amy's especial request, what she called "the laughing song," the Mephistopheles solo, from Faust. Then he asked Gladys to sing a Norwegian song, a wild yet plaintive melody, that fitted well the words.

"Play on, play on;
Father's gone a sailing,
Where the wind is wailing,
Play on, play on.
Soon will he be homing,
Thro' the tender gloaming,
Unto the shore.

“My heart is full of yearning
For one who cometh not again,
Gone, —— beyond returning, —
One who cometh never more,
Never more ! never more !
Play !

“He is gone so far,
Past the western star ;
Ah, in yon quiet shade,
Where the dead are laid,
Green graves there are.”

Amy was charmed with this song. The idea as well as the melody struck her fancy, and often, when she was wading or sailing boats, her childish voice was heard singing, —

“He is gone so far,
Past the western star.”

Within the cottage the blazing lamp, the music, and the home love filled the room with warmth, cheer, and brightness. Without, all was dark, wild, stormy. In the pause of the music a sudden sound was heard outside.

“Some one’s coming,” said Amy; “I heard a step.”

“It was only a blind or a loose board rattling in the wind, Amy,” said Philip. “You forget that no one can come.”

“It is hard to realize,” said Mrs. Strong, “that we are the one little spot of civilization and brightness here, that all around us are only the lonely woods, the dark water, the driving storm.”

Amy drew her chair closer into the circle around

the fire, and looked timidly at the black windows, dripping with raindrops.

But now Gladys and Philip, coming down from high art, indulged in a half-hour's musical nonsense. Gladys took her violin, and Philip his guitar, and they sang and played all sorts of college songs and negro melodies, until Chloe, who was sitting with her kitchen door open to enjoy the concert, was hardly able to sit still in her chair, and her deep contralto was sometimes heard from afar joining in the choruses.

The funniest of all was Philip's song, —

“ Possum meat am good to eat,
Carve 'm to de heart !

Chorus :

Carve dat possum, chillen,
Carve dat possum, chillen,
Ke-yarve dat possum.
Carve 'm to de heart ! ”

At the “carve” in the last line, Gladys ran her bow up the strings with a blood-curding realism that brought a prolonged howl of anguish from Betty, peacefully snoozing in Amy's lap. With all her musical advantages, evidently Betty was no Wagnerite.

So the Professor was merrily launched on another year.

When bedtime came, Amy clutched her mother's gown and kept close to her as they crossed the wind-swept porch, amid the dense darkness of the night, to the dining-room, to get their lamp. The cottage doors were never fastened by day or night, in fact, generally stood open; and it was no uncommon thing

to find a toad hopping around the dining-room in the early morning, in pursuit of flies or crumbs, he evidently considering the cottage a part of the woods, as indeed it was. Amy's imagination was comforted by having a large Saratoga trunk rolled against her bedroom door, and she felt her father's arrival a powerful reinforcement to their half of the cottage.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME VISITS.

THE storm lasted two or three days, and was followed by a clear, cool morning, the sky a deep blue, and the pond a mirror, in whose clear surface woods and shore lay simply doubled.

While the family were at breakfast, a strange noise resounded, seemingly overhead: "Konk! Konk!"

All ran out on the porch to see a flock of wild-geese flying over, southward bound.

"Fall has come," said Professor Strong. "I thought I detected a suspicion of autumn in the air this morning. You cannot deceive the wild birds."

"I begin to feel that it is time we, too, were flying home, like the birds," said Mrs. Strong.

After breakfast, Amy asked, —

"What are those black things floating about down at the other end of the pond?"

"I declare," said Philip, "they are ducks, I believe."

Opera glasses being brought to bear, several ducks were plainly seen riding at ease afar on the pond. All a sportsman's enthusiasm woke in Philip at the sight, and he paddled off cautiously in his canoe towards them, but was soon seen to turn back.

"They are only decoy ducks," he reported, in disgust.

Later it appeared that these sham ducks, which looked so wonderfully natural, belonged to the old gentleman with the braided locks, and had been put on the pond by him to tempt wild ducks to alight to their destruction.

Although it was still August, all signs pointed towards autumn. Letters began to thicken upon Gladys with offers for the coming season, plans had to be discussed and decided, and the outside world of care, work, and worry, began to press in upon the happy island. It was evidently time to "take up the burden of life again," and the Strongs prepared to depart.

Amy's feeling was divided. She looked forward eagerly to being once more at home on her beloved Hillside Avenue, with all her dear little friends, and yet it was hard to say good-by to the island, where she might never come again.

As Philip rowed them across the familiar pond to the steps for the last time, Amy suddenly exclaimed, —

"I never want to come to Plymouth again!"

"Why, Amy," said her mother, "I am surprised! I thought you had enjoyed being here so much."

"That is the very reason," said Amy; "I never could bear to see any one else living on our island."

"I confess to something of the same feeling," said her mother. "But, after all, in one way it always will be 'our island;' nothing can deprive us of the bright memories of our happy summer here. We must be glad that we have had it, rather than mourn because we can have it no more."

The Strongs stopped for a day and night on the

way to Brookline with the Coney's, in Milton. Mrs. Coney and Mrs. Strong had been girls together, and had always kept up the old friendship. There had been a large flock of little Coneys, but they were now growing up, and scattering out into the world, as young folks must. Two of the older boys were still at home, and Amy's especial comrades, Russell, a year older than herself, Ethel, almost exactly her age, and Bradford, a year younger.

They had always been very fond of Amy. When they were all little, on her visits trouble used to arise by all three wishing to lead her about at once; and as Amy unfortunately had but two hands, it was sometimes hard to settle the trouble amicably. They now welcomed her warmly, and no time was lost in setting off for a ramble all over the place, to show Amy the changes and improvements since her last visit.

Mr. Coney's place, although within the limits of Boston, was really a large farm, divided into fertile meadow, orchard, pasture, and wooded hill. The children led Amy a fine chase through the woods, where they gathered many wild-flowers. Then they came around to the vineyard, where some of the early varieties of grapes were beginning to ripen, as the children well knew. Their father, who was escorting the Strong's over the place, picked carefully-selected bunches of the ripest for them all, — bunches so large that Amy's small hand could hardly hold hers.

The children climbed with their grapes on top an immense boulder on the hillside in the woods, as large as a small house. Steps were built on one side, or it would have been impossible to ascend it. Over

it swept the great branches of a huge oak, almost touching the seat where the children sat at their ease, chatting as they ate their grapes. Through a gap in the branches was a charming glimpse of green meadows, and the shining waters of the Neponset River.

"We will go rowing after dinner to-night," said Russell. "You know our pasture runs down to the Neponset, and we keep a boat there."

"I shall like that so much," said Amy. "I can row a boat myself now, and I do love to be on the water. Oh, Ethel, see those cunning squirrels!"

On a small rock below them two large squirrels were sitting, attracted by the unripe grapes the children were throwing down. They sat up on their hind-legs, their bushy tails jauntily aloft, holding the grapes in their fore-paws, and nibbling daintily at them, their bright, restless eyes keeping a sharp lookout for danger.

"Those squirrels are old acquaintances of ours," said Ethel. "They are very tame, and never seem the least afraid of us."

"But the old fellows are very careful not to let us catch them, all the same," said Russell.

"They are too wise," said Bradford, whose eyes were as soft and bright and black as the squirrels'.

"Come down to the grove, Amy, and swing," said Ethel.

A grove of majestic oaks lay at the foot of the wooded hill back of the house. One could not enter it without a thrill of admiration, almost veneration. Straight up went the huge trunks, perhaps thirty feet without a limb, like the pillars of a temple. The

shining leaves overhead were the temple's roof, and beneath, the foot sunk silently into velvety green sward.

At one end of this grove a large swing was hung, something like a sleigh-box, with two seats, so that four persons could swing at once.

Mr. and Mrs. Coney and the Strongs entered the grove as the children did. The gentlemen seated themselves to discuss the affairs of the nation, while the ladies went down to the swing to watch the children.

Burton, one of the older boys, met them, carrying something in his hand, which, on nearer approach, proved to be a live snake about two feet long. Burton held the snake by the back of his neck, the snake writhing and throwing himself about in vain efforts to escape.

Mr. Coney's children were trained to regard all living creatures with intelligent interest, as objects of study and investigation. Mr. Coney would have been disgusted indeed had one of his daughters screamed at a mouse or spider, or run from a snake. Burton's snake was, in his eyes, a rare "specimen," and politeness prompted him to present this treasure to their guest.

"Mrs. Strong," he said, advancing with his gift, "do you care for snakes?"

Mrs. Strong's theory agreed precisely with Mr. Coney's, and she had tried to teach Amy that all living creatures are our humbler cousins. Not for anything would she have seemed to fear the snake; but she made haste to say, before Burton came too near, —

“Not very much, thank you, Burton.”

Amy shrank a little behind her mother, but did not scream or run, while the Coney children took the snake as a matter of course, as if Burton had picked a fine rose and offered it to Mrs. Strong. Burton, disappointed, departed to find more sympathetic admirers of his treasure, and the four children swung merrily on under the great oaks, until the luncheon bell rang.

After luncheon they all went driving, Amy, Ethel, and Bradford on the back seat of the open beach-wagon. The back seat was very gay with much giggling, laughter, and chat. Bradford's black eyes shone with mischief, and he was full of pranks that kept the girls laughing, and his mother looking around to see that the fun did not grow too wild.

Meantime, the beach-wagon rolled on, now over heights where they had wide views of Dorchester Bay, blue to-day under the blue sky; now along the meadows beside the Neponset, where the Blue Hills of Milton loomed grandly up above them.

After their return, Ethel showed Amy all the cunning tricks she had taught her bright dog, Cæsar, which made Amy want a dog of her own more than ever. Burton took them rowing in the sunset up the beautiful Neponset. In the evening the children played games in the library. All too soon came bedtime; then morning, and good-by, after a happy visit full of pleasures Amy would long remember.

Her regret at leaving the Coneys was forgotten in the joy of reaching Sydney's, and being once more with her little nieces, who were at first disposed to affect shyness, but were soon as fond as ever of

their young aunt. Amy enjoyed her nieces so much, and was so happy with her sister Faith, who was all kindness to her little sister, even making Violet a lovely white silk dress, and giving her a bridal veil of mosquito netting, that she implored to be left behind when her parents proposed to spend a day and night at her Uncle Edward's. Uncle Edward and family had spent the last few summers at Nahant, and here the Strongs were asked to visit them.

Uncle Edward was her father's youngest brother. Amy had not seen him or his family since she was old enough to remember them. Worst of all, there were three strange boy cousins to be encountered. This was a terrible ordeal for the shy Amy, and she begged to be left behind.

"I don't want to go to Nahant, mamma," pleaded Amy; "I don't care anything about it. I would much rather stay here and play with my nieces. Before long we shall go back to Cincinnati, and I don't know when I shall see them again. And Faith is going to make Violet a new fall dress. Please let me stay here with Faith."

"No, I want you to go," said her mother. "You would regret it afterwards, I am sure, if you did not."

It was a bright and lovely morning when the Strongs left the cars at Lynn. Most hospitable was their welcome, for they stepped from the train almost into the arms of tall, strong Uncle Edward, and close by him stood Cousin Greta, holding by the hand a pretty, plump little boy of six, who looked so shyly at Amy that she began to feel quite brave herself. Cousin Greta was such a pleasant young lady, and

seemed so glad to see them, that Amy felt at ease with her at once.

Uncle Edward packed them into a light covered wagonette, and they rattled merrily away off through the streets of Lynn towards the sea, picking up on the way the two older boys, Ned and Allan, and a boy friend, Will McDougall.

"The boys are all absorbed in their cruise, Amy," said Greta. "Father has consented to let Ned go on a cruise in our yacht to Mt. Desert, taking Will McDougall with him. And Allan has strong hopes that he will be allowed to go too."

"I am going, Greta," said Allan. "You need n't speak as if there were any doubt about it."

Allan was about Amy's age, while Ned was fifteen, and his friend, Will, seventeen, — a reliable, sensible young fellow, whose presence on the trip made Mr. Strong feel much safer about Ned. The boys had been to Lynn for supplies to provision the yacht for her voyage.

"Mother will have to get those blankets and the bread and things all on board to-night, father," said Ned; "Captain Black says he shall weigh anchor about four to-morrow morning, if the wind sets right."

"You need not worry about your mother's part of the cruise," said his father; "she is sure to be prompt."

Amy, to her great relief, soon found the two older boys to be so full of their cruise that the arrival of a girl cousin was in comparison an event too small to attract any attention.

The wagonette rolled into the grounds of a large summer "cottage," so called. There are cottages and

cottages. In this case the cottage was a large and elegantly-appointed house, as great a contrast as could be imagined to the rude island cottage, so dear to memory. A serious-faced young man in a black suit and white tie ran down to open the wagonette door. Amy thought he might be a guest, but soon learned that he was Thomas, the butler, come to take their valises.

On the long, wide porch stood Aunt Adelaide, whose warm welcome made Amy already feel at home. A gentleman sitting on the porch reading was introduced as Aunt Adelaide's brother, the Rev. Mr. Clarke, from Kansas City. He proved, much to Amy's relief, to be the only guest at the house, and, on further acquaintance, a most delightful man, fond of children. Mr. Clarke was at once attracted by Amy's refined, intelligent face, and they became good friends, and she learned much from "Uncle Robert," as the boys called him.

The cottage stood on high ground, ending in bold rocks jutting into the sea. Below the rocks, on a sandy beach, stood the bathing houses. Great trees surrounded the house, and on one side, framed in by the elm boughs, was a beautiful outlook upon the wide blue ocean, with Egg Rock Island and its lighthouse in the centre.

After luncheon, Greta asked their guests to go out and inspect the wonderful yacht, about which the boys talked so much. Professor Strong preferred to stay on the porch and talk with his brother, and Aunt Adelaide was busy preparing the outfit for the cruise. Allan and Percy escorted Mrs. Strong, Greta, and Amy down to the beach of Lynn Harbor.

"That's the Sunbeam," said Allan, pointing off across the harbor, where a small yacht rode gracefully at anchor. "Isn't she a beauty?"

"How can we get out to her?" asked Amy.

"The steward is rowing in for us," said Allan. "See, there he comes."

A boat with "Sunbeam" on its bow, rowed by a young man in blue uniform and a gold-banded cap, which also bore the word "Sunbeam" on its front, now grazed the sand, and the party embarked.

"It seems like Billington to be in a boat again, doesn't it, mamma?" said Amy.

"Yes; only Billington boating was rather tamer than this," said her mother.

The waves were running briskly before a fine breeze, and the boat tossed buoyantly up and down on them as it sped on towards the yacht. The salt breeze was enough to make one hungry, even right after luncheon.

It was quite exciting to climb on board the yacht, where the captain stood waiting to receive them. He took them down below, and showed them the berths, and the skilful way in which the dishes and other articles were stowed away, every inch of space being economized. Amy was fascinated by these arrangements, which seemed to her not unlike dolls' house-keeping, and she almost wished she, too, were a boy, that she might know the delights of such a trip as Ned was to have.

But the quarters being cramped and close below, and the "Sunbeam" tossing about in a lively way, Amy soon began to change her mind, and not to feel so sure she should enjoy an ocean trip. Greta, noti-

cing that she grew pale and quiet, proposed that they go on deck. Here they had pleasant seats in the shade of a sail drawn part way up the mast, and the steward brought them glasses of iced raspberry shrub. The fresh breeze revived Amy, and she looked about in delight on a scene so novel to her, — the blue, sparkling water, the restless waves, the many vessels of all sorts and sizes, from large sloops and schooners to tiny sailboats, that flitted across the bay tipped over slantingly at what seemed to Amy a dangerous angle.

Allan was in close conference with the captain.

“Is Allan really going on the cruise?” asked Amy.

“No, I am afraid not,” said Greta. “He is a delicate child, and mother is afraid to risk him on so long a trip. She thinks he is too young. She feels anxious about Ned all the time he is out.”

“But Allan will be sadly disappointed,” said Mrs. Strong.

“I suppose he will,” said Greta. “But where is Percy?”

Percy was found enjoying himself greatly, out on the very point of the bow, hanging over, dangling a string in the water.

“I’m only fishing, Greta,” he said, when Greta insisted on his leaving such a dangerous place.

Greta found Percy so lively a responsibility on shipboard, that she was glad when Mrs. Strong proposed that they go ashore.

By this time Percy had discovered that his cousin Amy was not dangerous, and was disposed to be very friendly. On the beach he helped her gather shells,

to be added to her precious collection stowed away in all the chinks and cracks of Mrs. Strong's trunk. Most valuable of all was a large horse-shoe crab, picked up on Plymouth beach. So frail was this treasure, that it was carefully rolled in tissue paper, and packed in the crown of Mrs. Strong's lace bonnet. Then Percy took Amy out to the stable to see the horses, the cow, and, above all, the pony.

When Amy went upstairs to dress for dinner, she said, —

“Oh, mamma, you don't know what a beautiful little pony and cart they have! Do you suppose I shall have a chance to drive that pony while we are here?”

Amy was a natural horsewoman, and fond of driving whenever she had an opportunity.

“I should not wonder,” said her mother. “Aunt Adelaide knows what will please children.”

“Oh, I do hope I can,” said Amy. “I long to drive that dear cunning little pony. He is so pretty and gentle, — as gentle as a kitten, or as my bantams at home.”

Towards night, when the sun was low, they were taken driving. Professor Strong and his wife, Aunt Adelaide, Greta, and Percy went in the open carriage, a “barouche landau,” in which they luxuriously “explored” Nahant in a manner to have satisfied even Mrs. Elton.

“My brother is going for the mail with the pony and cart, a little later,” Aunt Adelaide explained, “and he wants to take Amy with him. He thinks Amy will enjoy the pony.”

Amy gave her mother a radiant smile, and her

mother smiled back almost as radiantly, pleased with her little girl's pleasure.

Nahant was beautiful that day, as indeed she is all days. The perfect roads overhung by noble old trees, under whose checkered shade bowled along handsome equipages; the beautiful homes overlooking the sea; above all, the wide expanse of the all-surrounding blue ocean, dashing up in white foam at the base of the great red-brown rocks; these made pictures not easily to be forgotten by the Cincinnatians, who must soon turn their backs on the ocean, and journey almost a thousand miles away. Mrs. Strong's pleasure was increased by the thought, "How happy Amy is now, no doubt."

And presently she had a glimpse of Amy's happiness. As they were going up a hill, around a turn at the top came the brown pony trotting sturdily on, Amy all smiles, and Uncle Robert waving his hand as they passed. They looked like two comrades well satisfied with each other. Amy, with her flowing golden hair under the jaunty hat, with a pink glow on her cheeks, and her blue eyes shining with delight, coming down the hill with the radiance of the bright western sky for a background, made a picture that her mother would long treasure in her heart.

But, afterwards, it appeared that there had been one drawback to Amy's perfect happiness.

"I did want to drive that pony myself so dreadfully," she confided to her mother, when they were alone.

"Why did not you ask Mr. Clarke to let you drive?" said her mother; "he would have been perfectly willing. Probably he thought you did not know how."

"Oh, I didn't like to," said Amy. "But anyway, we had a perfectly lovely drive."

"And so you are not sorry that you came to Nahant?"

"Sorry? I should think not. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Mr. Clarke is very nice; he told me such interesting things about the stars; and only think, to-night he is going to show us Jupiter's moons through the telescope. I always did long to look through a telescope."

In the evening, as they all sat on the porch, Uncle Robert gave the young folks an interesting talk about the stars, which the older people enjoyed too. He said to Amy, —

"Look at the Milky Way. What do you see?"

"A white haze, like a thin cloud," said Amy.

"Now look at it through this opera glass," said Uncle Robert, handing her a large opera glass.

"Oh—oh!" exclaimed Amy; "why, it's all little stars!"

Then she peeped out to make sure it was really the Milky Way at which she was looking, then back into the glass.

"I feel as if I were looking far on into space."

"With the most powerful telescope, bringing into view hundreds more of stars than you see now," said Uncle Robert, "there is still the milky haze beyond, composed of stars so far away that it is impossible for us to distinguish them. And you must remember, Amy, that every one of those 'little stars,' as you call them, is actually a sun like ours, with probably a system of planets revolving around it."

Amy was filled with awe at the sense of the im-

ments of the universe thus brought home to her mind. She had often pondered it. Once, when much younger, she had called her mother upstairs after she had gone to bed, saying she could not get to sleep "because she was afraid."

"Why, Amy," her mother had remonstrated, "there is nothing to be afraid of!"

"I am afraid of the universe," said Amy. "It is so big, with all those worlds going way out into space, and we are so little, and seem of so little consequence."

As the child talked, a sense of awe filled the mother's soul. Home to her, too, came a sense of our littleness and feebleness amid the vastness of the universe.

"Amy," she said, "the words of Frederick Hosmer's hymn express it all, —

" I little see, I little know,
Yet can I fear no ill ;
He who hath guided me till now
Will be my Leader still."

God cares for us now; He will always care for us. We can only fall back on our trust in Him, and try to do right. It is always safe to do right."

Mr. Clarke brought out a small telescope, fixed it in position, and showed every one Jupiter and its moons. Through the telescope it became plain that Jupiter was not the little twinkling star it looked to the naked eye, but a round globe. Finally, Thomas brought out iced lemonade, and so let them down gently to earth and earthly topics again.

Altogether it was a great evening for Amy, filling

her mind with many thoughts; and when she went to bed she was full of talk.

"Do you suppose, mamma, that after death we can go from star to star, all through the universe?" she asked.

"We do not know; it is possible. Many people think so," said her mother.

"How much Dr. Hough would enjoy that!" said Amy; "he likes to investigate things so much. How delightful it would be! Do you think we are in the universe after we die, mamma?"

"Yes, I think so. We do not know anything about it, of course," said her mother, "but I believe that we and our friends who have passed out of our sight are still in the same universe, only in different rooms, so to speak. Jesus, you know, said, 'In my Father's house there are many mansions,' which means rooms."

But now, seeing that Amy's eyes were large and shining, and her mind evidently very active, she changed the topic to matters not so likely to over-excite the little brain that thought too much.

"I wonder how poor Allan will bear his great disappointment to-morrow?" she said. "When Ned and Will went off early to bed to-night, because they must rise so early to-morrow morning, Allan went too. Then his father slipped out quietly after him, I noticed."

"I don't blame Allan," said Amy. "If I were a boy, I should be crazy to go off on a cruise in that yacht. It seems so adventuresome."

"Venturesome, I suppose you mean," said her mother.

"No, adventuresome. It's an Our Land word. It means going on adventures."

The next morning the places of Ned and Will at the breakfast-table were vacant. They had risen in the small hours of the morning, and slipped out of the house while every one slept, and were now off the coast somewhere, well under weigh on the famous cruise.

"I shall not have a moment's peace of mind until I see Ned safe at home again," said Aunt Adelaide; "especially if a severe storm comes up, shall I be very anxious. I am so glad dear Allan gave up, like a good boy, and stayed at home to please his father."

The good boy, Allan, sat very quietly, not to say glumly, eating his breakfast in silence, apparently not much comforted by a sense of his goodness. He seemed to feel rather crushed, and as if life were not worth living. But he made no murmurs or complaints, and, after breakfast, out on the porch, kept close to his father, even sitting on the arm of his chair and lying up against him, although Mr. Strong wore a spotless white flannel suit, which Greta felt was not likely to be improved by too close contact with a boy's clothes.

"Why don't you get a chair of your own, Allan?" she asked, in her gentle voice. "There are plenty of chairs."

"Let him stay here," said his father, putting his arm around Allan, and Allan stayed.

Aunt Adelaide had told Mrs. Strong that it was Allan's strong love for his father that had reconciled him to their decision that he could not go on the cruise.

"Allan is particularly his father's boy," she said. "When his father reminded him that he should only be here a week, and must then return to his business, Allan was willing to give up the cruise for the sake of being with his father. But he feels greatly disappointed, poor boy. His father will make it up to him somehow."

After a while Aunt Adelaide, who had discovered that Amy would enjoy driving the pony, said, —

"Allan, would n't you like to take your cousin Amy out with the pony, and let her drive?"

"I don't know," said Allan, indifferently, while Amy's face flushed a little, in her eagerness that Allan should consent.

"I think that would be so pleasant," said his mother. "You know Amy is going away this afternoon."

Allan said nothing, but lopped about the porch in an aimless way, not seeming to care much for driving, or anything else in truth.

Amy had brought down the block and pencils that were her inseparable travelling companions, and was amusing Percy by drawing pictures. She drew a picture of Uncle Robert smoking, which Mr. Clarke put carefully in his note-book, saying, —

"I shall take that home to Kansas City to remember you by, Amy."

Allan drew near and looked on as Amy drew a little while, and then disappeared, no one knew where, until he appeared again, driving the pony and cart up to the steps.

"That's a nice boy, Allan," said his mother. "Get your hat, Amy."

Amy ran joyfully for her hat. But evidently Allan did not want to be too nice a boy. He came up on the porch and lounged in a sea-chair, while the patient pony stood by the steps, and poor Amy's heart began to sink, fearing that Allan might change his mind, and not go after all; and she did so long to drive the pretty pony. It seemed the chance of a lifetime to her.

But Amy behaved very well; she manifested no impatience, did not even intimate that she wanted to go driving, but took up her block again, and began drawing the "Story of an Apple Pie" for Percy. Allan soon became interested too, in spite of himself, and when Z had "zigzagged" the poor pie, he said, —

"Come on, Amy; we might as well go if we are going."

Amy thought so too, and off they went. Allan let Amy occupy the proud post of driver. As Amy, all smiles, took up the reins, and the pony trotted smartly off down the driveway under the elm-trees' arch, her mother, rather to her own surprise, felt a pang of something remarkably like envy, — a passion of which she considered herself incapable. So perhaps she was, for herself; but for Amy, — ah, that was another matter. The cart was brown, and the pony brown spotted with white. He was round and fat and shining, and his sheared mane stood up in a smart ridge down his neck. Amy wore a brown dress that morning, and her brown hat tipped up behind over the golden hair that floated down her shoulders. She and the pony and cart all matched each other.

"Amy looks as if that pony belonged to her," thought her mother. "I wish she could have a pony. It's too bad the child can't have one, when it would be such a happiness to her. It's a shame so many children can have things Amy must go without."

And for an instant Mrs. Strong rebelled against fate, because Amy must be denied some pleasures. Then common sense revived again, and she thought, —

"How foolish I am! Amy really enjoys the pony far more than if she owned him, because he has the charm of novelty. Allan, who can drive him at any time, cares but little about it. Of course Amy would love a pony dearly, but, in the long run, I know it is far from well for a child to have every wish gratified. Life loses its interest when there is no longer anything to wish for. Amy is better off as she is."

All the time this mental debate was going on in Mrs. Strong's mind, she was outwardly listening and making suitable replies to Aunt Adelaide's account of some extremely interesting lectures she had lately attended.

Meantime Amy, as happy as any real princess, guided the pretty pony skilfully along the shaded roads of Nahant, and across the narrow neck of sand that joins the promontory of Nahant to Lynn. On one side the blue waters of the ocean, on the other those of the bay, running up, seemed undecided whether or no to sweep across this narrow strip of sand and make Nahant an island. To drive there in the salt breeze was almost equal to being at sea, without the risk of sea sickness or shipwreck. Amy thought it most delightful, especially when, in coming back, at Allan's suggestion, they drove right on the

hard sand of the beach with wavelets sometimes running up and breaking under the cart wheels.

She came home glowing with happiness, while Allan's face had preceptibly shortened and brightened, and he began once more to take an interest in life. They found the ladies and Professor Strong about going down to take a bath. Mr. Strong, having lent his brother his bathing suit, walked up and down the beach smoking, and keeping an eye on Allan, who was showing Amy how well he could swim, and on Percy and Amy, as, barefooted, they ran up and down the beach, letting the waves break over their feet, and gathering shells to add to Amy's collection.

After dinner, good-by had again to be said. Amy was delighted that her father had decided to go up to Boston by the steamboat. The Strongs sat up on deck, at the very bow, Amy clasping a huge paper box full of seashells. The salt sea-breeze swept around them so coolly that they were obliged to put on heavy wraps, but its invigorating tonic filled them with new life. They looked with delight on the beautiful, ever-changing picture of rock, and shore, and blue sea, running with white-capped waves. When they entered Boston harbor, the interest intensified, as they saw the lovely islands, the vessels of all sorts and nations going to and fro, or moored thickly around the long wharves, and the gilt dome of the historic city herself looming up ahead.

As they landed, Amy said, —

“Oh, dear! I wish our voyage had been longer; it was over too soon. But then, I shall see my nieces again.”

“Yes,” said her mother. “Luckily there is always something pleasant everywhere. No one place has everything.”

“That is really true, is n’t it?” said Amy. “When I must leave my nieces, why, then comes Hackmatack, and Greenfield, and Uncle Joseph, and Aunt Rebecca, and all those good times. And *then* comes Hillside Avenue again, and all my little friends!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLD HACKMATAK AND OLD TIMES.

PROFESSOR STRONG'S father had been settled as a minister for thirty years in the little farming town of Hackmatack, among the hills of Western Massachusetts. Here Professor Strong was born, and passed his boyhood. Amy never tired of hearing her father's stories that began, "When I was a boy." When very little, she used to climb into his lap, summer evenings on the porch, and beg, —

"Now, papa, please tell me a chapter of your autobiography."

Her father could rarely resist the persuasive force of the big word coming from the little girl. Now Amy was to have the great pleasure of actually visiting the scene of these familiar stories, and so was full of happy anticipation.

They left the train, and embarked in the Hackmatack stage for a seven-mile drive, uphill most of the way from Miller's River, with only an occasional downhill for variety. As they mounted higher and higher among the hills, the Professor began to warm up, to indulge in reminiscences, to ask questions of Mr. Holland, the driver, who was, by the way, no ordinary driver, but a man of substance and standing in both church and state in Hackmatack.

Amy could not sufficiently admire the wild-flowers along the roadside and in the woods. Especially was she charmed when they passed a pond along whose shores flamed tall spikes of cardinal flower, the first she had ever seen. And the blackberries — one would not have believed there were so many blackberries in the world as hung down from all the bushes in the rail-fence corners.

“Oh, mamma, only see the berries! How I wish I could get out and pick a few!” said Amy.

Mr. Holland kindly stopped, as the Strongs were his only passengers, and let Amy gather some of the “real Hackmatack berries,” as she told her father when she climbed back again to share her spoils with him and her mother.

By and by the tip of a white steeple appeared above the tree tops.

“Oh, papa,” cried Amy, “is that the steeple you climbed when you were a boy?”

“The very one,” said her father, smiling.

“I don’t see how you dared,” said Amy.

“Boys dare do many things they ought not,” said her father.

Now they came down hill, past the old graveyard, past the church, into the little cluster of white houses nestled at the foot of Mt. Zoar, rising grandly up above the village like a huge monster lying dormant, but full of conscious life. At the tavern they engaged two rooms opening into each other, much to Amy’s comfort. After dinner, Mr. Holland drove up with a carryall and spirited young horse, which Professor Strong had engaged of him for the afternoon.

"Oh, please, may I drive, papa?" asked Amy, as they started off.

"Yes, if you want to," said her father, passing over the reins.

"Daniel, how can you!" remonstrated Mrs. Strong from the back seat. "This horse looks very gay. See his ears!"

"As long as I sit by Amy it is perfectly safe," said her husband. "The only way she can ever learn to drive is by practising."

"Yes, mamma, I have to practise," said Amy, delighted.

"I like to have you learn to drive," said her mother, "but I confess I should prefer to have you practise when I am not a passenger. But never mind."

For Amy sat up so erect and proud and satisfied, holding the reins, and her father, keeping the whip in his own hands, watched her and the horse so carefully, that Mrs. Strong's fears subsided, and she would not spoil Amy's pleasure. Amy even turned out, all by herself, when they met an ox-cart.

"There, mamma, did you see that?" she said. "I told you I knew how to drive."

They drove by the place where Professor Strong's grandmother used to live, and he pointed out the old orchard and the cider-mill to Amy. But the old house had been torn down, when Uncle Zach had built a new one across the road, and they only saw its cellar-hole. They drove on, always up or down hill, getting most beautiful views now and then down the green valleys that lay among the mountains.

"This air is as cool and fresh as water from a mountain spring," said Mrs. Strong.

"There's no healthier place in the world than Hackmatack," said her husband.

"I do wish papa would buy our farm here," said Amy.

"Our farm" was one of Amy's favorite dreams, and many were her plans for the happy time "when we go to live on a farm."

"We will see about that when the time comes," said her father, well pleased with the compliments to Hackmatack.

They drove into the old Sprague place to call upon Miss Amanda Sprague, who lived alone now in the home of her forefathers. But in summer she had frequent visits from her nephews and nieces and their children, who liked nothing better than a visit to "Aunt 'Manda" in the ancestral home. Professor Strong had known well, and highly respected, Miss Amanda's father, Captain Sprague, one of his father's most valued parishioners, and the Sprague boys had been his boyish friends and schoolmates, while Mrs. Strong, when a girl, went to school to Miss Amanda.

Miss Amanda came out her side door when she saw a carriage driving down her road, and was gratifyingly surprised and pleased to see such old friends. The others went into the house, but Amy, not wishing to leave her fascinating post as driver, said, —

"I will sit in the carriage and hold the horse, papa."

"Very well; I will keep an eye on her out the window," said her father, to reassure his wife.

Once in Miss Amanda's quaint, pleasant old parlor, Professor and Mrs. Strong were soon so deep in talk with her about old times and former friends, that

they forgot to watch Amy, especially as the horse, after his long drive, seemed well content to stand quietly. Suddenly a sound of grating wheels attracted Mrs. Strong's attention. Glancing out, she cried, —

“Daniel, Amy is tipping over!”

All rushed out, to find Amy in the act of turning around, two wheels high in the air, two cramped dangerously beneath the carriage, while the horse looked as if he mistrusted something was wrong. Amy, looking pale but determined, held the reins tightly, and just as her father reached her, brought around triumphantly, even if on one wheel.

“There! I did it!” said Amy.

“What were you trying to do, Amy?” asked both father and mother at once.

“The flies bit the horse so he didn't stand still, and I thought I would just turn him around and bring him more into the shade,” said Amy, not without a sense of satisfaction in her feat, if she were still pale. The truth was, she had never turned a carriage around before, and had felt ambitious to try that feat, and the horse's restlessness furnished too good an excuse to be lost.

Having several other calls to make, the Strong's now bid Miss Amanda good-by. As they drove out from under the shade of her large trees, for the first time they observed dark clouds rolling rapidly up the sky from behind Mt. Zoar, while an ominous mutter of thunder was heard from the same direction.

“I don't know whether we shall have time to call on Aunt Lucinda or not before the shower reaches us,” said Professor Strong. “We will see if we can make it.”

To Mrs. Strong's satisfaction, he now took the reins, and put the horse to his best pace over the hills. But the storm travelled faster than they. The wind grew stronger, lashing the tree branches wildly about, the clouds rolled dark over the sky, the thunder pealed louder, with bright flashes of lightning, and just as they dashed up to the Hackmatack House, the storm broke in great severity.

"It is only a shower," said Professor Strong. "I have put the horse under the shed, so that we can go out again when it clears. Meantime, I will take you up into the hall, and show Amy where I used to attend singing-school and balls."

Amy was delighted at this. The hall, the scene of so many past gaieties, was bare and echoing with emptiness; but she listened with deep interest while her father told where he used to sit, where Mr. Foster, the singing teacher, stood, and so on. As they were talking the door opened, and a tall man with a strong face and iron-gray hair entered.

"Daniel," he said, "what are you doing up here, I should like to know?"

Professor Strong stared a moment, then exclaimed,—

"Why, Cyrus Dole! Is it you?"

Hearty was the handshaking and greeting between the old friends, who had hardly met since they were boys together.

"The storm drove me into the tavern for shelter," said Mr. Dole. "Some men sitting on the piazza said, 'If you want to see Parson Strong's son, he is up stairs in the hall,' so up I came."

They all went down into the parlor, where, while the storm raged without, the old friends indulged in

reminiscences of former times, much to the entertainment of Amy and her mother, and Amy learned some chapters of her father's autobiography she had never before heard.

The storm lasted until tea time, preventing any more driving. When at last the clouds broke away, and the sun, low in the west, gleamed brightly out over the wet trees, dripping and shining with rain-drops, Mr. Dole said good-by, and drove off to his home in Northfield, where he was one of the leading men.

After tea the Strong's procured the key, and went up the hill to visit the old church, beautiful for situation, almost in the shadow of Mt. Zoar looming up grandly close by. Behind the pulpit where he stood for thirty years, hung a life-sized portrait of Amy's grandfather Strong, presented the parish by his oldest son, Erasmus. They went up into the gallery and saw the very seat where Professor Strong sat when he sang in the choir.

From the church they went to call at the house where Professor Strong was born, and where he lived until he went to college. It was now owned by a retired merchant from Boston, who had chosen Hackmatack as a quiet, healthful place wherein to pass his last days. He was most cordial, and took the Strong's all over the house, with which Amy was so familiar from her father's stories. The front hall, painted in landscapes by her grandmother, had long since been papered over, but on the second floor, beside some attic stairs built by its present owner, was still preserved a bit of its former glory in a fragment of waving palm-branches.

Amy was very anxious to go down to the old site of the house, and see where it had been moved up across the fields, but the grass was too deep and wet. They went to pass the evening with her father's Uncle Josiah, still living at the advanced age of ninety-five, mentally as bright as ever, and a most entertaining companion, — a fine example of the old New England stock.

The next morning dawned in splendor after the shower of the day before. The face of nature was washed so clean that it shone. The air was fresh, pure, and full of sweetness, and so clear that it seemed one could almost touch Mt. Zoar as the Strongs walked up to the old burying-ground, where they had arranged that Mr. Holland was to call for them on his way to the station.

Here, in the pleasant graveyard on the hillside, with its neat stone wall and many large trees, slept Professor Strong's ancestors. Amy read on the stones names she had often heard about, and looked at the monument erected by her Uncle Erasmus to his parents' memory. Then she asked, —

“May I walk on up the road, mamma, and be picking berries until you overtake me?”

As it was nearly time for Mr. Holland to come for them, and Hackmatack was such a safe place, her mother consented. When they started for the station behind a fine pair of spirited colts, Mrs. Strong expected soon to overtake Amy, but as they drove on up hill around turn after turn, and still no sign of Amy appeared, she began to feel uneasy.

“How foolish I was to let her start on alone!” she said. “I thought she could not get far ahead of us. I don't see what has become of her.”

But now, as they rounded another turn, her mother's eyes were gladdened by the sight of Amy's slender form coming back down the hill to meet them. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks pink with her walk in the fresh air, her hands were full of wild-flowers, and her lips stained with blackberries.

"Only see, mamma," she said, as she climbed into the open wagon, "what perfectly beautiful goldenrod, and asters and ferns I found! I am going to take them to Aunt Rebecca. I guess she will be very glad to have them from her old home. How lovely Hackmatack is! Do please buy our farm here, papa! I should love to live here so much,—summers, I mean. Of course, I never want to give up Hillside Avenue. We could live there winters, you know, and here summers."

"That sounds well, Amy," said her father; "but it takes money to carry out such fine plans."

Their next and last visit was to be at Greenfield, Mrs. Strong's former home. Greenfield is the shire town of the county,—a town of typical New England charm, with its green common in the heart of the village overhung with great elms, which also overarch and lend dignity and beauty to all the principal streets. Here Mrs. Strong had come every summer during her parents' life, bringing Amy from babyhood to visit her grandparents. Some of Amy's fondest recollections were of these happy visits at Grandpa May's, of grandpa's flower-garden and chickens, of grandma's cookies, and of all the kindness lavished upon her by these dear friends. In her great story, "The Ups and Downs of the Noble Family," these visits to grandpa's played a large

part. The chapter called "Green Meadow" ran as follows, —

"Finally the conductor called 'Green Meadow!' and Ariel jumped out of the train almost before it stopped, she was so eager. She jumped right into the arms of a white-haired gentleman. Just as Ariel was saying 'Excuse me, sir,' in a hasty manner, she saw that it was her grandfather. She threw her arms around him, and hugged him like a miniature bear. After she had released him, Dr. May put them in the coach, and after the trunks were piled up behind, the driver drove off.

"When the coach drove up before the house, Grandma May was waiting for them at the front door. The first thing that Grandma May said, after they were all seated at the supper-table, was, —

"'Well, I declare, what a big girl Ariel is getting to be,' and Ariel felt very old indeed.

"Ariel woke up early the next morning, and at first she did not know where she was, but when she looked around her, she remembered everything, so she jumped out of bed and ran to the window.

"It was a 'real Massachusetts morning,' as Mrs. Noble said when she woke up. Ariel quickly dressed herself, and ran downstairs.

"Grandpa May's house was a little green cottage nestled in among trees, standing on about an acre of land. Dr. May loved all flowers, and cultivated a great many of them. He was quite noted for his roses and pansies in Green Meadow; he also had a great many fruit-trees and vegetables.

"There was one particular tree that was easily climbed, and there was always a hammock swung under it.

"As I have said, Ariel ran downstairs. She thought that Ann, grandma's cook, would be in the kitchen, but she was not there, and Ariel heard her just getting out of bed upstairs.

"Ariel thought she would go out doors, so she tried to unlock the kitchen door, but she could not do it. Then she thought of the woodshed. Going down through that, she had no difficulty in unfastening the double doors, so she quickly did it.

"Grandpa May kept chickens in the wood-house, and the minute the door was open, —

" ' Out they flew,
With a coockle —doodle doo !'

"Then Ariel went into the garden and the grape arbor, where her swing was, and finally climbed up into the old apple-tree.

"Meantime, Ann had come downstairs, and was greatly disturbed to find the house doors open. But in a minute she burst out laughing, when she went out doors and saw Ariel calmly sitting in the apple-tree. When Ariel saw her, she quickly, if not gracefully, got down from the tree by sliding down its sloping trunk. Then she ran to Ann and said, —

" ' Good-morning. I got up early.'

" ' So I see; and you nearly scared me out of my wits,' said Ann, laughingly.

"While Ann was getting breakfast, Ariel drew a picture of her going to a party. Ariel was so absorbed in the picture that she did not see her grandfather, till he said, —

" ' Good-morning, Miss Earlybird. You're out early this morning.'

“‘Oh, grandpa,’ she answered, ‘I let out your chickens for you, and I got up ever and ever so early, and I frightened Ann nearly out of her wits, she said.’

“‘Well, well, I shall have to call you Mistress Morning Glory, I think.’

“‘Oh, what a pretty name!’ cried Ariel, delightedly.”

In a later chapter, called “Pansie and Pie,” was this description of her grandfather:—

“Grandpa May was a well-known favorite with all the children round about, and every morning, when he went to his business, he took pears, or apples, or candy, or flowers with him, which he gave to children on the way.

“One day he was going down town, when a little boy, about five years old, stepped up to him and said,—

“‘Good-morning, Mr. Dr. May. Please, have you got anything in your pocket for me to-day?’ and Dr. May had produced a big, juicy pear.

“Dr. May used to be a doctor, but now he was town-clerk and treasurer. He was slightly bent with writing so much, but every one liked it, for it was part of him, and he would not seem natural without it.”

Another of Amy’s fondly remembered pleasures was being allowed to “help” grandma cook, which joy was thus described:—

“She found her grandmother making pies, and Ariel immediately wanted to help. Her grandmother gave her a little pie-crust dough, and a saucer, and showed her how to fix it; then she gave her some of

the apple to put in it. After it was finished, she put it in the oven.

"Then Ann gave her the potatoes to mash, and after that, she cut the bread; so, altogether, she felt quite a cook. When dinner was ready, she proudly presented her pie and potatoes, and nicely cut bread."

It was in this story that Amy, after speaking of the death of one of her characters, said, "I will not tell the end; it was too sad, if indeed it was an end. It seemed more like a beginning in another world."

But grandpa had died some years ago, and grandma had followed him, and the old place had been sold to strangers. The Strongs were to be the guests, during their stay, of Amy's Aunt Rebecca, whose husband, Dr. Morse, was a retired minister. Dr. and Mrs. Morse were most hospitable people, whose house always had a warm welcome for all their friends. They were especially kind and indulgent to children. Having none of their own, they had adopted a baby girl needing a home. All the pent-up parent love in their hearts was lavished on this child, who grew to be a sweet girl of thirteen, full of loving-kindness and winning ways. Then suddenly she was taken from them. Now they loved all children for her dear sake. Amy, in particular, was a great favorite with them. They felt almost as if their Alice had come back when they saw once more a little girl's dolls sitting in state on the library sofa, and traces of a child's presence all about the lonely house. Amy was equally fond of them. She said,—

"I love to go to Aunt Rebecca's, because she will let me do anything I want to, — even to toast bread by the parlor fire."

It seemed, if possible, that Aunt Rebecca was kinder than ever on this visit. She was much pleased with the flowers that Amy brought her from Hackmatack, and the second day after her arrival, said, —

"Amy, I have asked two nice little girls to come and play with you this afternoon. You may have a dolls' tea-party up in Alice's play-room in the attic, if you will be careful not to disarrange it."

"Oh, thank you, Aunt Rebecca," said Amy; "I will be *very* careful. I should like to have a dolls' wedding, because Violet has such a lovely bridal dress and veil that Faith made her, and she and Lord Fauntleroy have only been married once since she had it, because I have been travelling about so much."

"That will be very nice," said Aunt Rebecca, "and I will have Katie make you some chocolate wedding-cake."

"If there is going to be a wedding in this house, Amy," said her Uncle Joseph, "you ought to ask Mr. Catlin and me to attend. What is a wedding without ministers?"

Mr. Catlin was a prominent Southern minister, who was spending a day or two with Dr. Morse. He, too, was fond of children, and seconded Dr. Morse's motion heartily.

"You may both come," said Amy, "if you will not make fun of it."

"That seems rather a reflection on our ministerial

dignity," said Mr. Catlin; "but we will accept your cordial invitation."

In the afternoon Bessie and Grace arrived promptly with their best dolls in their arms, and were delighted to find so important an affair as a wedding on hand. The two ministers really climbed up the attic stairs to assist at the occasion. They reported at the tea-table that they felt slighted because not invited to perform the ceremony, Amy not trusting them, but preferring to do it herself, with the aid of a service book lent her by Uncle Joseph. But they had some of the wedding-cake. The wedding was altogether such a success, that when Amy returned home, she hastened to repeat it in the family dining-room, for the benefit of most of the children on Hill-side Avenue, Lord Fauntleroy and Violet graciously allowing themselves to be married four times in one afternoon.

One of Amy's first pleasures on reaching Uncle Joseph's was finding a letter from her cousin Marguerite, which had been forwarded from Plymouth. Marguerite was travelling in Europe, but would return in time for school in October.

This letter was dated, —

HOTEL VICTORIA, BADEN-BADEN,
GERMANY, July 31st.

DEAR AMY, — Here we are back in Germany again, and I am rather glad for several reasons, principally because we do not have table d'hôte at seven or eight o'clock in the evening here, as we did in Switzerland.

Baden-Baden is a very pretty place indeed. There is a large enclosed space shaded by big trees, and lined with pretty shops, with seats in it, called a "Conversation" place;

people go there to read, talk, or walk. In front is the Conversation Hall. The Hall has a reading-room, and a place to go and drink the water. The water is not anything remarkable. This morning we all drank a glass of the hot, tasteless liquid, and did not like it much.

Do you like to ride horseback? I do, very much indeed, though I do not often get a chance to. Last Tuesday, we went to Grindelwald by carriage from Interlaken. There is a glacier near there, and we, that is papa, Theo, and I, went up to it on horseback, while mamma was carried by two men in a chair. The path was steep and narrow most of the way, but the horses were sure-footed and walked nearly all the time, so there was no danger, especially as there was a guide holding on to the bridle almost all the time. The glacier looked dirty. It was a mass of greenish ice, in big lumps, all tumbled together on a hillside, with a liberal amount of mud scattered over it. Below it was a deep gorge, worn out by the glacier long ago, with a stream flowing in it. This last is made by the melting of the glacier, and is quite a respectable little brook. After seeing what I have described, we mounted again and went down. It was a very nice trip, although we drove back to Interlaken in a pouring rain.

It rained almost all the time we were at Interlaken, and the day we went to Berne, where we spent last Friday, Theo's birthday. Theo had a very nice birthday. He was twelve years old, and got what he has long wished for, a watch. Papa gave him a very handsome steel and gold one, and mamma a set of bear chessmen, each piece a bear in some funny attitude. I gave him a cane with a bear carved on it. When we get home mamma will have it made into an umbrella for him to take to school.

I am going out to drive now and must stop.

Wednesday. The drive yesterday was a lovely one. The road lay through beautiful woods, part of the Black Forest, and went up to an old ruined castle, which papa, Theo, and I explored. It was very interesting indeed, and we had a fine view from the top of one of the old walls. There was a

gallery which ran around a great room at about the place where the second floor must have been. This room was very large. At one end was a big basin made of stone and in the middle of the hall one stone pillar had been left standing. The doors and windows were very low, so we had to stoop going in! Some of the walls date from the third century!

The Rhine has ever so many of these old ruins on its banks, with acres of grape vines below them. We are going to Heidelberg to-day, and Friday will take the trip up the Rhine.

Perhaps you have all the stamps I enclose; if so, please send them back to me, as Eleanor would like to have them. She has just begun a collection. Please write often, but don't write after the thirtieth of August, as we sail for home just a month from to-day.

Your loving cousin,

MARGUERITE STRONG.

Aunt Rebecca, who was very fond of Marguerite, was glad to hear her letter, and thought it remarkably good for a girl of her age.

"Marguerite loves to write letters," said Amy. "She writes me so many notes at school that I can't keep up with answering them. Miss Nutting made us promise that we would not write notes in school-time, so Marguerite writes her notes at home evenings, and brings them to school next day."

"You might write her a ship letter," said Aunt Rebecca, "and send it so it would be given her the last thing before they sail."

"I will," said Amy, "and I will illustrate it, and put in some of my Billington photographs. And I will put in my enigma, that I made up at Billington, so she and Theo can have something to amuse themselves with on the voyage."

This was Amy's enigma: —

I am composed of sixteen letters.

My 9-6-4-13-2 is material from which dresses are made.

My 14-10-15-4-16 is sharp pointed.

My 1-8-5 prevents speech.

My 7-11-12-5 soars aloft.

My 9-10-3-4-6 is where I want to be when the canoe tips over.

My whole was a distinguished man.

Amy spent much time on the ship letter, preparing it in seven parts, one for each day of the voyage; but, alas, Marguerite never received the famous letter, it probably having been mailed too late to reach her before sailing.

Mrs. Strong and Amy went down to Grandpa May's old place, and looked sadly over the fence into the yard, where every tree and bush was so familiar, and where it seemed as if they must see grandma opening the front door to welcome them, and grandpa coming around the corner from the garden with his hands full of flowers. And they drove up to the little country graveyard under Shelburne Mountain, where, amid scenes dear and familiar to them in life, rested all that was earthly of the good, kind grandparents. Here, too, slept Amy's Uncle Teddy, taken away in the rare promise of his youth.

As they stood together in the silence by these graves so dear, from the blue sky above, the floating white clouds, the bird-songs, and the restful circle of hill and meadow around, seemed to come an assurance of peace. The breeze rustling through the trees seemed to murmur, —

“It is well with those to whom your hearts cling with such undying love. Be comforted. Ere long,

you, too, shall rest as they, and love shall have its own again."

Many pleasant visits were paid to friends and relations scattered about on farms, or in adjoining towns, and Amy's collection grew apace, as her friends well knew her tastes. Perhaps her choicest treasure was the skeleton of a woodchuck, presented by some cousins in "the Meadows."

"I don't believe Elliot Carman will get a woodchuck's bones in California," she said.

"If my trunk should happen to break open on our way home, and horse-shoe crabs, shells, stones, woodchuck bones and pressed flowers come tumbling out, I should certainly be taken for a crazy woman," said Mrs. Strong, laughing.

But in reality she willingly accepted some trouble from Amy's treasures, knowing how precious they were from the little girl's point of view. She was not one of the mothers who thoughtlessly destroy "Tommy's trash," or "Mary's rubbish," wholly regardless of the feelings of the small owners. She felt that children have certain rights which even grown people should respect.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RECEPTION.

AT last came the time to say good-by to Uncle Joseph, Aunt Rebecca, and Katie, all standing on the porch, and waving their hands, as the village coach rounded the corner of Park Street, and vanished from their view.

"Please let me see the tickets, papa," said Amy, as soon as they were well settled in the cars.

She looked with satisfaction at the long tickets that said, "From Greenfield to Cincinnati." The word "Cincinnati" looked pleasant and homelike.

"I have had a perfectly delightful summer," she said. "I never had such beautiful times in all my life, and I shall always remember it. But the best part of all will be getting home again. I do want to see all the girls so much, I can hardly wait until I get there."

The next morning, her first question was, —

"How soon shall we be in Cincinnati, papa?"

"In about three hours," said her father. "The train is an hour late."

From this time on the train seemed to drag along with painful slowness to Amy. She began a poem on her block, expressive of her feelings.

One, two,
I'm very blue.

Three, four,
I'm about to roar.

"I object to the word 'roar,' Amy," said her mother.

"Poetry must rhyme, you know, mamma," said Amy, as she scribbled on, —

Five, six,
I'm in a pretty fix.

Seven, eight,
I *cannot* wait.

"Why don't you read your St. Nicholas?" asked her mother. "Time would pass faster if you were occupied."

"I feel too excited to read," said Amy. "I wonder if the children will be expecting me? Janet and Ned are not home from Lakeside yet, and Cousin Elizabeth and the children are going to stay at Gloucester until school begins, but the rest are all at home. How I do long to see them all!"

At last they saw the cloud of smoke forever hanging over dear old Cincinnati, and the semicircle of hills, with inclines running steeply up them, and knew that they were entering the outskirts of the city. Then came the aggravating time of stopping, starting, backing, and general delay that always attends the entering of a large city over a network of many intersecting roads, amid the roar and screech of train whistles on all sides. But finally they came

into the Grand Central Station, and the porter called out, "Cincinnati!"

Mrs. Strong and Amy took the Edgeton electric car for home, as Professor Strong had to stop in town on business. They sped out of the city and up the long hill to beautiful Edgeton, the vacant lots along the way, that had been waving with fragrant sweet clover when they left, now masses of white and purple asters and tall purple iron-weed, whose rank growth spoke of the rich soil of Ohio.

Their arrival on Hillside Avenue made no excitement, for the excellent reason that no one saw them. Not a child was in sight.

"I wonder where all the children are?" said Amy, all smiles, and in a fine twitter of excitement.

Bridget and Nora, however, gave them the warmest possible welcome. The whole house was in shining order, and home had never looked dearer or more attractive. Prince showed that she knew them well, and rubbed and purred about Amy in rapture, trying to speak if cat ever did.

"The children are just wild about your coming home," said Nora. "They've been bothering the life out of me all the forenoon, running up here every time our door-bell rang, to ask, 'Has Amy come? Has Amy come, Nora?'"

"Oh! where are they, Nora?" asked Amy.

"They're all down at Kitty Clover's play-house," said Nora.

Amy dashed outdoors, and over to the Clovers', where there at once arose a grand pow-wow. Mrs. Strong, looking out the window, saw Amy the centre of a joyous group of children, she and they equally

happy and excited, all shouting and jumping about, and talking at once, in their joy at being together again.

When she came in to luncheon, Amy reported, —

“Kitty and Irene and the rest are going to give a grand reception this afternoon, in honor of my return; they have been cooking all the week for it. Only think, when I went down there, they were making grape jelly on Kitty’s cook stove, — real grape jelly!”

Amy could hardly wait to eat her luncheon, or change her travelling-dress for an old gingham that had been left at home, before she rushed off to the scene of the festivities, where most of the children were already waiting for her.

It was a busy afternoon. First came the reception, of which Amy gave her mother a full account at night. It seemed to have been a great success, quite equal for real enjoyment to any of the “brilliant functions” reported in society items.

“We had almost everything to eat you can think of,” said Amy. “Were n’t the boys kind? They took up a collection among themselves, and bought a beefsteak, and the girls cooked it. It was a little tough, but we did n’t mind. It was real beefsteak. And then we had fried potatoes, and apples, and five kinds of cake, and a little pie, and the grape jelly. The jelly tasted funny, like lard, but we all ate some of it, because Irene and Kitty made it on Kitty’s cook stove. I had to sit on a hassock, because I was the guest of honor, but all the others sat on the ground. We all talked and talked, and told each other about all the fun we had had this summer.

Ben Bruce went to Washington with his father. Isn't it funny? We have all had the best time we ever had in our lives."

"Where did you go after the reception?" asked her mother. "I saw you girls all hippity-hopping down the street."

"Oh, Laura asked us all down to her house to a rat's funeral. It was so comical! Laura's cook killed a rat under the kitchen sink this morning with the poker, and Laura thought he ought to have a funeral. Laura made us all sit in a solemn row on camp stools under the trees in their back yard, and then she made a long discourse over the poor rat. Then Lansing buried him. Oh, there is a great piece of news on the avenue. The Barr boys have a little baby sister! They are so proud and fond of her, they really quarrel to see which shall roll her out in her carriage. I don't wonder; she is the sweetest, cunningest little thing, so soft, and white, and pretty. Billy showed her to me."

The Barr baby lent a new element of excitement to the avenue. She was always in the thick of everything going on, as whatever boy happened to be in the charge of the baby-carriage when anything occurred, naturally wished to know what the excitement was, and so rushed into the midst of it, baby and all. In this way she participated in all the dog-fights, fires, runaways, and other stirring events that enlivened the avenue. The boys ran races with her carriage up and down the avenue, and invented many new and pleasing experiments with it, that made some of the other boys on the avenue wish that they, too, had a little baby sister.

The mothers of the avenue constantly prophesied, "that Barr baby will certainly be killed some day." Mrs. Barr was a lady of a cheerful, easy temperament, who had successfully reared seven boys, and she never worried, but felt as if everything would come out right, as it generally did, in fact. If the baby tipped over now and then, a few minutes crying was the extent of her injuries; and when the ice cart ran over her, somehow she escaped uninjured, though every one said, "There, I told you so!" She delighted in her brothers, and evidently thought them the most entertaining and lively nurses imaginable.

Another great item of news on the avenue was the engagement of young Dr. Trimble.

"It's a great secret," said Amy. "The Trimbles don't want any one to know it yet."

"How did you happen to hear of it, then?" asked her mother.

"Why, you see it was this way. The Bodmans are all here from Connecticut to visit their Grandfather Trimble. Lewis Bodman was so overjoyed because his uncle was engaged, that he felt he had to tell some one. So he took Billy Barr down in the hollow, back of his grandfather's, very privately, and said, —

"Cross your heart, and promise never to tell, Billy, and I'll tell you a great secret."

"Billy couldn't keep it to himself, so he took Ben Bruce off alone, and made him cross *his* heart, and promise never to tell, and then told him. Ben knew his big sister Josie would be so much interested, that he made her cross *her* heart, and then told her. And then, of course, Josie told Maude Clover, and

all Dr. Trimble's other young lady friends, so now nearly every one knows it. Kitty told me, but I did not promise not to tell."

Elliot Carman, who had returned from his trip to Alaska and California about the same time that Amy came home, generously brought over some of his curiosities to add to her ever-growing collection. Among the things he gave her were a pair of tiny deerskin moccasins not a finger long, made by the Indians, a nest of the trap-door spider, door and all, and, best of all, Elliot thought, a tarantula preserved in a bottle of alcohol.

"I found that tarantula myself," said Elliot. "I have three more. I could have got plenty of them down in Southern California, but the ladies at the hotel were so silly. They made such a fuss when they found I was collecting tarantulas, that mother made me give it up."

In return Amy gave Elliot some sea-urchins and shells, and pieces of conglomerate rock from Hackmatack, and wished, as did Elliot, that she had another woodchuck's skeleton to give him.

Elliot took almost as lively an interest as did Amy herself in the progress of her flock of chickens during her absence. He often went down with her to look at them, and gave her much valuable advice.

Amy's little blank book, labelled "Memorandum of my Chickens," showed that there had been many ups and downs in the chicken kingdom since its foundation. Some of its entries read, —

Mr. Chickabod made king, Dec. 27th.

Set Mrs. Chickabod first week in March.

Set Princess March 9th.

Failure!!!!

Race of Chickabod.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Saturday, eaten by a cat. Friday and Thursday disappeared about the same time as Saturday. No more Thursday, Friday, Saturday!

Race of Cockletop.

Spot, Speckle, and Yellow.

Yellow disappeared.

Jenny Lind set unsuccessfully.

Adelina Patti set unsuccessfully.

Mrs. John Drew is a persevering though cross old lady. She began to set at the same time as Jenny Lind and Patti, and though unsuccessful, continues!

Lady Rowena is the only one of my hens that has never set. I admire and esteem her for it! She lays splendid large eggs. All of my hens do when not setting, but they set all the time! However, I don't mind.

Amy's special pet, Dorcas Boy, the tiny white bantam, had not forgotten her in her absence. He came, as of old, to eat from her hand, and let her pick him up and carry him where she pleased, and they still had their crowing matches, he answering her every time.

"Dorcas Boy flies upstairs in the stable every night to sleep, because he stands in such awe of Father Dorcas," Amy told Elliot. "Then in the morning he can't come down."

"Why don't you drive him down?" asked Elliot; "he can fly down easily enough if he only thinks so."

"I don't want to," said Amy. "He always waits at the top of the stairs for me. The minute I open the stable door, he begins to crow and make funny little noises to attract my attention, until I go up and bring him down. He is my favorite chicken."

Soon after Mrs. Strong's return, she was out working in her flower-beds, when Dixon saw her, and came over to engage her in conversation. He began by asking, —

“Mrs. Strong, what makes the sea salt?”

Mrs. Strong, whose ideas on this subject were not so clear as she could have wished, made rather a vague reply about evaporation.

“Did you know,” continued Dixon, after a short pause, “that we are made of charcoal and water?”

“Indeed?” was Mrs. Strong's safe reply.

“Yes, I read it in a book. I wonder how far it is to China? — right down through the earth, I mean. Do you know, Mrs. Strong?”

“I suppose it must be about three thousand miles,” said Mrs. Strong.

Dixon sauntered around a little, and then remarked, —

“I have been reading about guns lately. How are breech-loading rifles made, Mrs. Strong?”

“I am afraid I shall have to confess ignorance, Dixon.”

“They used to have flint locks in old times. Bang! Bang!” said Dixon, firing off an imaginary gun at Prince, who was loitering about, as she liked to do when her mistress worked outdoors.

“What are percussion caps made of? Did you ever hear one go off?” was Dixon's next question.

“Yes, I suppose I hear a good many every Fourth of July.”

“Can you tell me, Mrs. Strong, why they call gun-boats by that name?”

“Really, Dixon,” said Mrs. Strong, beginning to

feel the mental strain of Dixon's conversation, "you ask too many questions. I never feel like talking much when I am weeding."

Dixon was silent fully two minutes. Then he said, —

"I'm a republican; Mr. Clover is a democrat. What are you, Mrs. Strong?"

No answer from Mrs. Strong, hard at work with her trowel.

Presently Dixon said, —

"I've learned to whistle this summer. Would you like to hear me whistle?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Strong, patiently.

Dixon, solemnly, and with much sucking in of breath, performed, "After the ball is over," the only air of which he was yet master. Morning, noon, and night, all summer, had the neighbors listened to the long-drawn melody of this air, incessantly practised by Dixon.

"I've learned to turn somersaults, too," said Dixon. "At least, I think I can turn one."

Dixon stood on his head, his slender legs rose uncertainly in the air, waved wildly about, and flapped ignominiously back again, without going over after all.

"Ah," said Dixon, red in the face, "I didn't quite manage to do it that time. But I think I can; I've done it several times."

Dixon now devoted himself to practising somersaults, at the risk, Mrs. Strong felt, of either breaking his neck or bursting a blood-vessel; but at least his energies were so absorbed that he ceased to ask questions for a while.

Soon after her return, Amy one Sunday felt moved
to compose an

ODE TO PRINCE.

Prince is my cat
Who has shining eyes ;
She's not very fat,
But still she is wise.

In the evening she prowleth 'round
In the dark ;
And to the mouse's squeak
Doth hark.

Her coat is like
A tabby cat's,
And she doth love
To lie on mats.

Her little toes and cunning nose
Are very interesting ;
When she is left out in the rain,
She finds it quite depressing.

I close this ode at my abode,
Whereat the Prince is dwelling,
And what will happen to her next,
I'm sure there's no foretelling.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GIRLS' MUSICAL CLUB.

FORTUNATELY, after their return home, there was still some time for the children to play together outdoors before the schools began, and they improved to the utmost the delightful days of early autumn. The public schools began first, and poor Kitty went like Bryant's quarry slave at night, "scourged to his dungeon," while Amy and Irene appreciated all the more by contrast their own freedom for two weeks longer. While Kitty and Laura were at school, they played dolls, made wonderful doll costumes, and devised many sports for which the days were all too short.

One of their indoor games was this. Each wrote several questions and dropped them into a box, also several words. The box was well shaken; then each drew out a word and a question, and must write a poem answering her question and bringing in the word, a task that often seemed impossible, and required some ingenuity.

For instance, Amy drew the word "pillow," and the question, "When did you love?" This was her answer:—

I first did love
When I first saw my chickens !
But the dickens, the dickens,
What shall I do when they die?
I shall cry and cry,
With a "tear in my eye,"
Then bury them under a weeping willow,
And make their feathers into a pillow.

Another question she drew was, "What do you have at home?" and the word "snow," whereon she wrote, —

I have my friends
When I'm at home,
And oft about
The fields we roam;
And in the winter,
Down we go,
Coasting on
The melting snow!

Another of the girls' amusements was to write a noun and adjective beginning with the same letter, a pair for each letter of the alphabet, and then give them to each other to illustrate. Amy, for "chair, cowardly," drew two girls standing on chairs in fright at a mouse. "Apple, angry," represented a boy climbing a tree, with his hand just grasping a large apple, not seeing a woman beneath who was about to apply a big whip in her hand. "Maiden, mad," was a scene from Hamlet. "Gate, graceful," was a country scene, where a young man was helping a young lady over a gate.

One afternoon Amy, who had wondered that she had not seen Irene that day, received a note, brought by Mr. Green.

DEAR AMY, — I have a most atrocious cold, and have n't been out of the house in a perfect age, it seems to me, and I would be delighted beyond expression if you would be so kind and condescending as to come over and play with me this afternoon. Will you ???????

I do not know what you will think of me when I tell you that I am reading "Little Women" for the fifth time!

School commences to-morrow,— delightful prospect. (Here was drawn a girl's face dissolved in a flood of tears.) I must close now. Do come if you can.

Your loving friend,

IRENE.

A blot which trickled across the page was labelled, "The Mississippi River."

Amy accepted this invitation, and time passed happily with the invalid until four o'clock, when Kitty came running in, on her way home from school, full of a new scheme.

"Oh, girls," she said, "I have such a nice plan! Let's get up a girls' musical club!"

Amy and Irene, always ready for new enterprises, were both charmed with this idea.

"We can meet every other Saturday at one of our houses," continued Kitty. "Every one must play something every time. Then we can have something to eat, and then we might finish off by playing games."

"I think it will be perfectly delightful," said Irene.

"I'm so glad you thought of it, Kitty," said Amy. "Who shall we have in it?"

"You and Irene and I, that's three; and Laura, of course, and Janet."

"Frida plays very nicely, if she is a little younger," said Amy.

"Well, we'll ask her. And we might ask May Morgan. That will be seven. That's enough, I think. I'm sure it's all I want to play before."

"But May does n't play the piano," said Amy.

"I know it; but I talked it over with her at school to-day, and she wants to join the club awfully. And she is such a nice girl, I thought we should all want her in it."

"Yes, of course we do," said Amy.

"She might read a selection," said Irene.

"Yes, so she can," said Kitty.

Kitty and Amy went out at once to see the girls, and secure the members of the new club, who all fell in with the scheme enthusiastically. From that day practising was taken up with new energy and interest, as each member of the club wished to do her best at the first meeting, which was to be held at Kitty's. The mothers, in view of this fresh zeal for practising, could but approve of the new club, and agree to provide the necessary refreshments.

In due time, Amy's school began. While sorry to lose her freedom and be a slave to "nine o'clock" once more, she was glad to meet again her teachers and her schoolmates, especially Marguerite. Although they sat in the same desk, there was never half time to say all they wished, and frequent notes were exchanged, like this, which Marguerite brought to school one morning, when Amy had been absent for a few days, and laid on Amy's arithmetic after prayers:—

DEAR AMY,— So you are back, at last, and right welcome, too! I am so glad to see you. It was decidedly lonely to sit here alone. How do you like our new desk? I like it very well; on the whole, it does not matter much where we sit, does it?

We went down to see Hermann Saturday. Some of the things he does are wonderful. We went with Aunt Marie, but her Ned could not go because he had a bad cold, and they feared croup. Colds are “*a la mode*” now, “*n'est pas?*” Am I not elegant?

As you have so kindly asked me to the musical club meeting at your house, Miss Alter thinks that you and I can learn a duet or two to play together. She brought me a book of very simple ones that are all the same very pretty, and I have learned the lower part of two. Would you like to learn what I call the “top part”?

Oh, for fear you should think there is an estrangement between myself and a certain lovely foreigner here, I will say that I had to write a story in French for my lesson the third period yesterday. Mademoiselle told me I might translate it from the English, and also said that she preferred “*la qualité*” to “*la quantité*,” and when I handed in my story, she marked it “*parfait!*” Wasn't that charming? I dearly love her.

I am really writing this note to ask you if you will come home from school with me to-morrow to luncheon, and spend the afternoon? Do come, and do write me a good long answer to this, and tell me how your new musical club is getting on. With love, your cousin

MARGUERITE.

P. S. We are reading “Macaulay's History of England” aloud evenings. Ever read it? Not bad.

M. S.

Did you hear that H. B. hurt herself in the gymnasium Friday? Observe this flourish! We had it in writing lesson the other day.”

There was no refusing this invitation, and so Amy and Marguerite walked happily home together from school next day.

Theo seemed unusually hungry at luncheon that day, and ate more than usual, so that, when he stopped, his mother said, laughingly, —

“Couldn’t you be persuaded to try something more, Theo?”

“No, thank you,” said Theo. “I am afraid it would stick in my esophagus.”

Of course Amy laughed at this, and Marguerite said, —

“Theo is studying physiology this term, and he is always displaying his knowledge.”

“I hope he doesn’t feel as Lily Hoffner said she did last year, when she began physiology,” said Amy. “She said she couldn’t sleep nights for thinking about her bones! I don’t believe I should enjoy physiology.”

After luncheon Marguerite showed Amy many beautiful things they had brought home from Europe, which interested Amy greatly, especially a dozen or more dolls dressed in the native costumes of the countries Marguerite had visited. Then Amy said, —

“Oh, Marguerite, I’m writing a grammar story!”

“A grammar story?” said Marguerite. “What is that? I thought you detested grammar.”

“So I do,” said Amy. “I can’t endure it, and that’s the reason I’m trying to make it interesting.”

She read aloud to Marguerite and Theo the

GRAMMAR STORY.

"*Mother Grammar*. — Now let us meet and see what we are good for. Sir Adjective, you may begin.

"*Adjective*. — Ladies and gentlemen, it is plain to see what *I* am good for. I tell the nature, good or bad, the color, size, and shape. Madame Interjection has the floor.

"*Interjection*. — The very idea that I should have to tell what I do! I exclaim in trouble, joy, or surprise, as 'Ah!' 'Oh!' 'Dear me!' 'How nice!' And now, proud Participle, you may speak.

"*Participle*. — And have I not reason to be proud? My ancestors were Verbs; and the noble Sir Adjective, whom you all honor and respect, is my great-grandfather. I share in both their natures. Little Preposition, you may speak.

"*Preposition*. — I'm not so little after all, Mr. Participle. I *always* go before a Noun or Pronoun.

"*Mother Grammar*. — Now, gentle Conjunction, 't is your turn to speak.

"*Conjunction*. — I only join together.

"*Mother Grammar*. — And joining is the best of all. The meeting now will close. But first, let me advise you all to be modest like Conjunction."

"Capital!" said Marguerite.

"That's very good, Amy," Theo condescended to say. "But come on outdoors now and I will show you something better than dolls or stories either. Come and see my new dog."

"Oh, Dash?" said Amy. "Marguerite has told

me about him, and I envy you. I want a dog so badly."

"Dash is none of your common dogs," said Theo, as he led the way out into the pleasant back-yard, where Dash, eagerly waiting, rushed to meet his young master the instant the door opened, and jumped all over him. He was a pure shepherd dog, of high breed, as the great ruff of brown hair encircling his neck and setting off his intelligent face at once proclaimed. The children ran and played all the afternoon under the big beech-trees with Dash.

When Amy left for home, Marguerite gave her a white ivory inkstand, carved in the image of a Swiss chalet, which she had brought from Switzerland expressly for her; and it was arranged that Marguerite should attend the next meeting of the Musical Club, to be held at Amy's the following Saturday.

The first meeting at Kitty's had been very successful. Rob and the other boys, feeling hurt at being omitted from the high privileges the young ladies were enjoying, especially the refreshments, had run up on the porch during the exercises, peeped in at the parlor windows, and clapped loudly at the end of each piece. But the girls would not condescend from the dignity of their club to take any notice of them, so finally the boys had departed to seek livelier sport, and were soon engaged in "shinny," the game just then popular among them.

The following Saturday, Mrs. Strong's parlor, full of bright young girls prettily dressed in their best, was a pleasant sight. Mrs. Strong, who considerately sat in the library lest she should embarrass the young performers, was amused at the conversation. Each

made as many excuses as if she had been a distinguished musician.

"Laura, you play first," said Amy.

"Oh, no, I don't want to play first," said Laura. "I think you ought to begin, Amy, because you are hostess."

"I don't believe I know this piece," said Amy, as she sat down to the piano. "You mustn't mind my mistakes, girls."

She really played very well. Then Kitty was asked to perform.

"I know I shall break down in the middle of this thing," she said; "I don't half know it. You may talk all you want to, girls, while I play."

But Kitty went through her piece much better than she professed to expect. The duet by Amy and Marguerite was much applauded, as indeed was everything played. There was much giggling and chattering between times.

May Morgan, as her contribution to the afternoon, read one of Longfellow's poems with excellent expression. Once, however, she stopped, saying, —

"Dear me, girls, here's a word I don't know how to pronounce."

"Pronounce it as it's spelled," suggested Irene.

Now this is sometimes a safe rule in the English language, but not always, as May found. Her word was "harangued." May divided it into syllables, and called it, "ha-ran-gewd," to rhyme with "glued," which made some of the older girls laugh. But as every one laughed all the time any way, May's feelings were not hurt; indeed, she laughed with the rest.

Amy had prepared a short adjective story for the girls' entertainment before they came. While they were sipping their chocolate, she asked them to give her adjectives, which she wrote in her blanks. The girls strove to see who could invent the worst adjectives, and Sir Adjective must have blushed for some of the pretenders masquerading under his name.

The story began, —

"It was a *red* Saturday on *pigeon-toed* Hillside Avenue. At three o'clock the *sorry* musical club met at the *kind* residence of the *high-flown* Mrs. Clover. The *hump-backed* Kitty received her *villanous* guests in the *ridiculous* drawing-room of her *foolish* home. Her *black* brother Rob was absent, — at least, so she *cantankerously* thought. *Religious* Miss Kitty Clover received in an *aristocratic, snake-colored* dress. Miss Irene Brownell looked perfectly *carnivorous* in a *big, freckled* costume. Miss Laura Dawson looked as *musical* as usual in a *slimy-eyed* gown. Miss May Morgan was, as she always is, *snub-nosed*, as were also *unmerciful* Miss Janet Frazier and the *ghostly* Miss Frida Goldschmidt. The *miserable* entertainment was opened by the *ungrateful* Miss Frazier, the *horriblest* player of the club. Her *hateful* fingers ran over the *perfect* keys in a *yellow* manner."

The story described minutely the playing of each performer, and ended, —

"Just as the last *terrific* chords were dying away under the *hideous* hands of the *lavender* musicians, a *squalid* roar was heard, and down the *squeaky* stairs *mournfully* rushed *gorgeous* Rob Clover, who

had *sorrowfully* secreted his *silly* self upstairs with the other *quiet* boys of the *noisy* avenue, — *immense* Ben Bruce, *gigantic* Paul Williams, *monstrous* Max Goldschmidt, *awful* Van Gooding, and *righteous* Elliot Carman. Infuriated by the *blunt* performance, they only needed the last *blood-curdling* duet to drive them *slippery*. Falling upon the *disgusting* members of the *radiant* club, they *considerately* dashed them into *aching*, *commonplace* pieces. This was the *comfortable* end of the *mild little* Musical Club."

Amy laughed so hard she with difficulty read this delightful tale, and the other girls nearly laughed themselves ill over it, especially when some particularly undesirable adjective fell to the lot of the girl who had exerted herself to invent it for some one else's benefit. Then they played games, and tried catches, as to see who could say fastest, without mistake, —

"She sells sea-shells. Shall he sell sea-shells?"

"Now, girls, let's dance," said Amy. "Irene, please help me move this table back."

Tables and chairs were moved away in a trice. The folding-doors were pushed back, throwing parlor and hall into one. The girls took turns playing waltzes and polkas, and around and around floated the merry couples, their hair flying out as they danced, cheeks flushed, eyes bright, their hearts as light as their tripping feet. Professor Strong could not help thinking it a very pretty sight, when he opened his front door, and walked unexpectedly into the midst of the lightly whirling couples.

"Oh, papa, you don't mind our dancing, do you?" asked Amy, flushed, and out of breath.

"Certainly not, Amy; I like to see you. Dance on," said her father, looking smilingly down on the happy company.

But now Marguerite was sent for, and the girls discovered, to their surprise, that it was nearly six o'clock, and departed with many assurances, —

"We have had a perfectly lovely time, Amy. The adjective story was so funny."

"Don't you think our musical club is a very nice thing, mamma?" asked Amy, when the last guest was gone, and she and her mother were replacing tables and chairs. "Don't you think it is really going to be very improving?"

"Well, perhaps," said her mother. "I am very sure you all enjoy it."

"Isn't Cousin Elizabeth kind? She is going to invite the club there, although none of her children belong to it. And after we have practised more we mean to give a musicale, and ask all the parents, and charge an admission, to raise money for the Associated Charities, so you see we shall really do good."

CHAPTER XXI.

NEBRASKA FRIENDS.

ONE Saturday morning in November, Amy called across from her window to Kitty, —

“Oh, Kitty, come over here a minute. I’ve just had such a nice letter from Jared.”

“Oh, have you? Isn’t it funny? I had one from Tommy this morning, too.”

Tommy and Jared were some new friends lately made, who lived in far-off Nebraska. Mrs. Taylor, the pastor’s wife, had received letters from a lady who, with an invalid husband and five children, had gone from New England to live in Nebraska. Drought, hail, and other disasters had destroyed their crops for three successive summers, and this family of intelligent, refined people were now in destitution.

Some of the letters had been read at Sunday-school, and the kind hearts of Kitty and Amy had become much interested in the children. That very Sunday afternoon they sat down together, and wrote long letters to the two older boys, telling all about their acting and other amusements. Now had come the answers. Kitty and Rob both came over to hear Jared’s letter.

These new friends lived on the prairie in a sod house, thirty miles from any town, store, or post-office. The idea of children who seemed much like themselves, living without almost every comfort that was necessary to their own lives, enlisted strongly both the sympathy and the imagination of the children.

"It seems like a story of pioneers, does n't it?" said Amy.

"Such people are pioneers," said Mrs. Strong.

"I wonder how a sod house is made?" said Amy.

"I asked Mrs. Johns about it in my last letter to her," said Mrs. Strong, "and this is what she writes:—

. . . I will describe our house to you, and the boys will tell the girls about the school-house. Ours is called a large house. It is fourteen feet wide, and twenty-six feet long. The sods are plowed on buffalo grass or blue joint to make them tough. Then they are cut in two feet lengths, and a wall laid up with them, like a brick wall. Rough boards covered with tarred paper, with a layer of sods on top, make the roof. We are fortunate, for we have a board floor. Many have none. Our house is plastered right on the sods with natural lime, which is found in these hills in places. They are rude affairs at best. Yet it is home, and I think it is not the dwelling that makes a happy home, but the inmates. My children are worth a mine of gold to me, and they will remember mother when all these hardships are a thing of the past. Your daughter and her little friend must be kind-hearted girls to wish to help brighten the lives of children less fortunate. The boys were delighted to receive their letters. Any little thing is a great event here with us. It is a very cold morning. I fear we are going to have another cold storm. Four of the children have gone to school this morn-

ing. It is a two-mile walk, and they are poorly protected to stand a cold storm. . . .

"It must be fun to live in a house like that," said Rob.

"Now let's hear Jared's letter, Amy," said Kitty.

Kitty and Rob had offered to send the boys their "Youth's Companion" each week when they were through reading it, and Amy also sent them a paper, and sometimes a magazine.

Jared's letter said, —

DEAR FRIENDS,— I received your letter, and was very glad to get it. I thank you for the papers. We like them very much. We play "I spy" too, and Indians, and other games. We do not have house games, and it is dull for us in cold weather. Carrie has a paper doll. We have two pet cats. One's name is Minnie, and the other is Mose. We have some pigeons. I would like to have seen the parade. I am glad you have lots of fun. I am eleven years old. I have light hair and blue eyes too. Tommy loves to draw and read. I would like to take part in your plays. I like to speak pieces. I most always speak funny ones. Papa and mamma and us children have lots of fun, on cold winter nights, speaking and reading. Grandpa always dances old-fashioned jigs and makes us laugh.

From your friend,

JARED JOHNS.

Tears stood in Mrs. Strong's eyes when Amy finished reading the little letter, written evidently with great pains, in a boy's scrawl.

"Isn't that a nice letter?" said Amy. "It makes me feel as if I knew Jared."

"One can see that he has a generous nature," said her mother. "Instead of being envious of you chil-

dren, who have so much more than he, and thinking, 'It's a shame we can't have such good times and things,' he says, 'I am glad you have lots of fun.' Think what a touching picture his letter paints, — the cold winter night, a blizzard perhaps howling around the little sod-house all alone on the prairie, and, within, the family so destitute of even ordinary comforts, keeping up each other's spirits, and making the best of things, cheering themselves by their own brightness, and that old grandpa dancing his jigs to make the children laugh! That family will come to something one of these days. They are made of the right stuff."

"Perhaps Jared or Tommy will be President," said Rob.

"That is not impossible," said Mrs. Strong. "Abraham Lincoln came from much such a home as theirs. Now, Kitty, let us hear what Tommy has to say."

"Tommy's letter is very interesting, too," said Kitty.

"I like it," said Rob, "because it tells about real Indians; only I wish he had told more about them."

Tommy's letter began, —

DEAR FRIEND. — I received your letter and was very glad to hear from you. I thank you for it, and also for the "Youth's Companion." I am glad to get it. Two years ago the Indians were on the war path, and we did not know what minute they would come down on us. You ask about my school-house. It is made of sods, and has only ten seats, There is no chimney, but a hole in the roof for a stove-pipe. To build a house they first plough where the sod is tough, and cut it in two foot lengths and then lay it up in walls. Then they get natural lime from the hills to plaster it, and put on rough boards for

roof, covered with tar-paper and dirt. We have one small blackboard. We have just had a blizzard, and it is awful cold. I am going to town with papa the next time he goes. It takes a whole day to go to town, and there are no houses for eighteen miles on the road. I went all alone once, and drove our team. Mamma worried, but I did not get lost. Jared has a sore thumb to-day, so he could not write very well. About a year ago he got some cactus needles in it, and every little while they work out and make it sore. Write soon again.

Your friend,

TOMMY JOHNS.

"His mother must be silly to worry about a boy thirteen years old getting lost," said Rob; "he only had to keep in the road. And if he did get on the wrong road, he could ask some one the way."

"You forget, Rob," said Mrs. Strong, "that it is all open prairie where he lives; no fences, no trees, no roads, only tracks worn here and there. And if there are no houses for eighteen miles, he probably did not meet a person on the way. I don't wonder his mother was anxious. Grown people often lose their way on those prairies, and sometimes perish during a blizzard. Often the only way they can do is to give their horses the reins, and trust to their instinct to bring them out."

"Anyway," said Rob, "it must be fun to start out and feel that you are going to have some adventure, perhaps, before you get back."

"The Woman's Alliance will send Mrs. Johns a large barrel of clothing soon," said Mrs. Strong. "What a pleasant thing it would be for our Sunday-school to get up a Christmas box to send these children! I will speak to the superintendent about it."

"Oh, do, mamma," said Amy. "I will send Tommy some drawing-blocks and pencils, because he loves to draw, and I will buy a doll, and dress her for little Carrie. Think of her having only one paper doll!"

"I will send Jared my game of nine-pins," said Rob. "They can all play with that winter evenings."

"I shall send Tommy some nice writing-paper, and a book, and some good game," said Kitty.

"And I shall certainly send something to the grandpa who dances jigs to amuse the children," said Mrs. Strong. "My heart warms towards that old grandpa."

Jared's and Tommy's letters were read next Sunday to the Sunday-school, and many of the children raised their hands when asked who would bring something for the Christmas box to be sent to Nebraska. The Sunday-school children were also greatly interested in a fair to be held by them early in December; the first they had ever held, and therefore a great event.

Rob's imagination was fired by the glimpse the Nebraska letters had given him of life on the prairies. He wondered if he could build a sod house; but, after digging a little back of the stable, gave that plan up, and came in to propose to the girls, —

"Come on down to the stable, girls, and play be farmers in Nebraska."

As they all came outdoors they met Irene and Janet coming over to play. They, too, were charmed with this game, because it was something new. Duke followed them down to the stable, evidently resolved to be in the play, whatever it might be.

"We'll take the stable for our settlement," said

Kitty. "Each of us can take a stall for her house. Play we are a little settlement of four sod houses on the prairie."

"I'll keep the store," said Rob. "Play it is thirty miles to my store. You can take my roller coaster for your farm wagon, and you must come across the prairie to buy goods of me."

Rob started down into the hollow back of the stable to build his store, closely followed by Duke.

"Duke ought to stay here," said Kitty. "Dogs belong more on a farm than they do in a store."

"Duke is my partner," said Rob. "Of course I must have a partner. Our firm is Clover and Co., and Duke is the Co."

The new firm went down the hill. Rob found two large packing-boxes in the stable, which, arranged in the fence corner, made fine counters. Then from the riches of the hollow he collected enough old tin cans, broken bottles, and the like, to stock his counters richly. The Co. followed closely at his heels, apparently taking an intelligent interest in all the business of the firm.

"We're all ready for business," called Rob up the hill.

"I have to go to town to buy some furniture at the store to-day," said Kitty. "Will you drive over with me, Amy?"

"Yes, I need to go too," said Amy, "for my coal is almost gone, and winter is coming, and we can't get any coal nearer than thirty miles."

"You must guard the settlement while we are gone," said Kitty to the other girls. "The Indians might come around any time, you know."

"We will keep a good watch," said Irene.

Amy and Kitty started for town with the roller coaster, after the affectionate leave-taking that became those who were surrounded by so many dangers. Their fellow-settlers stood in the door and waved their hands as they started briskly off, saying, —

"I hope you won't get lost on the prairies, or meet any Indians."

It took active imaginations to convert the steep hill-side down to the hollow into an open prairie, but the girls were equal to the occasion. They rambled around and around the Clovers' back yard, lost on the prairie, and Amy wrung her hands, crying, "We are lost!" in such high tragic fashion that Kitty could not help laughing. But now up from the hollow came a protest, in the voice of the senior partner, —

"Why don't you come on and buy something? I'm tired of waiting here so long for you!"

The rest of the thirty miles was quickly travelled over, and the roller coaster was loaded with large purchases of tin cans and old bottles, paid for liberally with gravel coin from the driveway, and bank bills from the syringa bush.

"When you get home," said Rob, "play it is night. Then Duke and I will be the Indians, and come and attack the settlement."

"Oh, what do you think?" said Irene, when they reached home. "We have seen several of the most savage Indians lurking about!"

"We shall probably be attacked to-night," said Kitty. "We must lock our doors carefully."

"Yes, and I think we had best sleep on our arms," said Amy.

The stable doors were locked, and then the girls went to bed, each in her own stall. Before long there came a great banging at the door, accompanied by fierce war-whoops, and the loud barking of a dog.

"Oh, what shall we do? The Indians are upon us!" cried the girls.

They were indeed, for Rob, his imagination wholly possessed by the game, felt like a real Indian for the time being. Finding all the doors locked, he climbed up to a small window, and actually began to smash the glass with the hatchet which served him as a tomahawk, while Duke barked and bounced about below, in high approval of these vigorous proceedings. Shrieks came from the stable, —

"Rob Clover, are you crazy?"

From the house was heard Mrs. Clover's voice, calling, —

"Rob, what *are* you doing? Stop this instant."

Thus recalled to himself, Rob, looking a little abashed, said, —

"Why, you see, mamma, the girls are settlers, and I'm attacking them. I'm an Indian, and I have to get at them."

"Come into the house," said his mother; "I want to talk with you."

This ended the fine game of "being farmers in Nebraska." Amy, after telling her mother about it, said, —

"I think Rob entered into the character too naturally."

In this opinion Mr. Clover probably agreed, as Rob had to pay for new glass in the stable window from his own pocket-money.

Professor and Mrs. Strong were going out to spend the evening that night, and Amy begged that she might be allowed to ask Kitty to stay overnight with her, for company. Mrs. Clover consented to let Kitty come, and the girls no doubt had a merry time before they went to sleep, for when Mrs. Strong returned from her concert, and went in to see that the children were all right, the state of the bed-clothes indicated that there had been a lively commotion, and beside Amy, lying close to her on a chair, was an old sword from her collection, while Kitty's hand, even in sleep, still grasped one of Amy's Indian clubs.

Amy said in explanation next morning, —

“Playing Indian made us nervous, I guess. At any rate, Kitty said she heard queer noises, and then I thought I heard them; and the girls were way down in the kitchen. So I told Kitty we had best arm ourselves. Besides, I wanted to use my sword that Uncle Cosgrove sent me.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MOTHER GOOSE PLAY.

THE children were now much absorbed in preparations for the Sunday-school fair. Mrs. Strong had undertaken to drill some of the children in a Mother Goose performance, which was to be part of the entertainment, and Amy and Kitty were quite undecided which they most wished to do, take part in the play, or have a table. But when the candy-table was offered them, they no longer hesitated.

"We can act some other time, perhaps," said Amy, "but we might never be asked to take the candy-table again. Some of the young ladies always want the candy-table. I think it will be fun."

"So do I," said Kitty. "Papa says he will give us five pounds of nice candies to sell."

"Mamma says she will give us a large box of Mullane's molasses taffy," said Amy. "Mrs. Hilton has given us three dollars to buy candy. And won't Maud make some of her nice, home-made candies for us?"

"Yes, she said she would. And Ben Bruce says his sister Josie will make a lot too. Ben is going to print all the tickets for the fair. You know he always does."

So the prospects for the candy-table looked bright.

Rose Carman's little ones were to have a doll-table, the work being done mostly by their teacher, who had a gift for dressing dolls. When Miss Carman's small men dolls, in their cunning dress-suits, were offered for sale, every little girl in the church wanted one, and there proved not to be half enough to go around. Miss Potter's class had the fancy-table, and the boys had a lemonade and peanut stand. Ben Bruce and Max Goldschmidt were the door-keepers.

Mrs. Strong had the usual difficulties invariably attending amateur theatricals. At the rehearsals some of the little actors were sure to be absent, and some did not know their lines, and some wanted to be something else, and it was found absolutely impossible to persuade any of the big boys to be "Simple Simon," lest the other boys should call the unlucky actor "Simple Simon" for ever afterwards. But somehow all these difficulties were finally overcome, as they always are, in spite of the manager's despair, only Simple Simon's scene had to be omitted.

When the afternoon of the fair arrived, the church vestry was an attractive picture, swarming with children, all dressed in their best. The candy-table, behind which stood black-eyed Kitty and blue-eyed Amy, both dressed in white, and all smiles and animation, was a centre of attraction. The girls put a low price on their wares, and gave liberal measure.

"If I were buying candy, I know I should like to get a good deal for my money," said Amy.

"So should I," said Kitty; "and I think we ought to do as we would be done by."

Conducted on these benevolent principles, the candy perhaps went at a sacrifice, but the children were happy, and that, after all, was the main object of the fair.

The vestry was crowded. From behind the curtain of the small stage at one end of the room came the sound of a great buzzing of voices, of laughing and running about, that raised the expectations of the audience on the outside almost beyond endurance. The stage was so small, and so overflowing with excited children, and with mothers and big sisters putting the last touches to costumes, and giving the last charges, that Mrs. Strong felt almost distracted.

On all sides could be heard, —

“Now, Johnny, don’t forget to cry aloud when you come on.”

“Lily, stand up straight, and be careful not to wrinkle your dress.”

“Be sure to speak up loud, Dixon, so people can hear you,” and so on.

“Now, children,” said Mrs. Strong, “it is time for the curtain to go up, and you *must* keep in order. All come into this room, and I will arrange you as you are to appear, and Jennie will tell you when to come on. Don’t show yourselves until she calls you to come.”

Jennie Briggs, one of the large girls in Mrs. Strong’s class, was to take charge of the little green-room on one side the stage, while Ethel Hansom, on the other side, was to take the performers in her care as they left the stage, and keep them pent up, if she could, in a small room at the left, out of sight of the audience.

It was a hard task to suppress the children. They were so excited, and so eager to see everything, that trying to get them into one room and keep them there, was much like trying to sweep up feathers in a fine breeze.

Dixon was especially irrepressible; he was here, there, everywhere, except in his proper place. Finally Mrs. Strong said, —

“Jennie, you must take hold of Dixon, and keep hold of him until it is time for him to come on. I believe we are all ready now. ‘Sh, children! you mustn’t even whisper now. The curtain is going up.”

The play was founded on “The Lawrence Mother Goose,” published by Lee and Shepard; but being, as a whole, too elaborate for such young performers, Mrs. Strong had simplified and changed it, so that the play now ran in this wise.

The curtain rising disclosed Hester Cary, a young girl from Mrs. Strong’s class, arrayed as Mother Goose, in a bright-flowered gown and skirt, a high pointed cap, and with the other familiar appointments of that well-known lady. On one side the stage stood Little Boy Blue, beside his haycock. He and Mother Goose made the opening poetical addresses, taken from the “Lawrence Mother Goose.”

Boy Blue was to blow his horn and announce the various characters. He first announced, —

“Bo-Peep.”

On came one of the little girls of the Sunday-school, dressed as a dainty shepherdess, with a hat all roses, and a crook all ribbons. Her eyes were covered; she was weeping, in deep grief.

Mother Goose. — “What is the matter, Bo-Peep? Why are you crying so hard?”

Bo-Peep recited the verses telling her sorrows. When she came to the words, —

“Leave them alone, and they’ll come home,
Bringing their tails behind them,”

a toy sheep was rolled upon the stage from the side scene, which Bo-Peep seized with joy, and pressing it fondly in her arms, retired amid the loud applause of the audience.

Boy Blue next announced “Mistress Mary,” and on came, hand in hand, five of the tiniest little maids in the Sunday-school, very shy and winning in their white frocks, with little bells and flowers.

Mother Goose: “Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?”

Mistress Mary: “With cockle shells, and silver bells,
And little maids all in a row, —”

waving her hand towards her attendants.

“And a very pretty garden it is,” said Mother Goose, as the little maids curtesied and retired into the charge of Ethel.

Boy Blue. — “The Maid of Pippin Hill.”

Dixon and Claribel appeared, Dixon in a velvet suit, with a wide lace collar, red rosettes on his shoes, and wearing a cocked hat, while Claribel wore a cunning little Greenaway bonnet trimmed with roses, and a gown and petticoat of blue silk.

Dixon recited, —

“As I was going up Pippin Hill,
Pippin Hill was dirty.
There I met a pretty maid,
And she made me a courtesy.”

Here Dixon doffed his three-cornered hat, and swept the ground with it in a deep bow, while Claribel made an equally profound courtesy, and then hid her blushes behind a large fan, as Dixon continued, —

“Little miss, pretty miss,
Blessings light upon you!
If I had half a crown a day,
I’d spend it all upon you.”

They made a farewell bow and courtesy to the audience, and retired amid much applause to the left, where Mrs. Strong, who was acting as prompter, made haste to seize Dixon and keep a firm hold of him.

“Little Red Riding Hood,” proclaimed Boy Blue, and on tripped another little damsel, wrapped in a scarlet hood and cloak, with the basket of dainties for her grandmother on her arm.

Mother Goose. — “Where are you going so bright and early, Red Riding Hood?”

Red Riding Hood. — “To see my grandmother.”

Mother Goose. — “And what are you carrying her?”

Red Riding Hood. — “Oh, something nice.”

Mother Goose. — “You are a very little girl to be going all the way through the woods to your grandmother’s cottage alone. Aren’t you afraid of meeting the wolf?”

Red Riding Hood. — “Oh, I’m not afraid of the wolf. I should run away so fast he couldn’t catch me.”

And suiting the action to the word, she ran gaily off the stage.

Boy Blue. — “Jack and Jill.”

Enter Bryant Taylor in evident pain, holding his forehead, which was half covered with a brown paper plaster. Dainty little Nellie Shaw, as Jill, came with him, her head bound with a handkerchief. They carried a pail of water between them.

Jill, in a sorrowful tone, said, —

“Jack and Jill went up the hill [*pointing back to the hill*],
To get a pail of water.”

Jack continued, —

“Jack felt down and broke his crown [*here he held his head as if in pain*],
And Jill came tumbling after.”

Bryant related this touching event in a matter-of-fact, earnest tone, as if it had actually happened.

All the children laughed, those in the audience, and those peeping out around the sides of the stage, and Mother Goose tenderly inquired, —

“Have you had any doctor, Jack?”

“Yes,” said Jack, in the same matter-of-fact tone, —

“Dr. Foster came from Gloucester,
In a shower of rain.”

Now Mother Goose, looking off to the right, asked, —

“Who can this be coming on horseback, Boy Blue?”

No answer, for Boy Blue had gone to sleep.

Mother Goose. — “I never! If that boy is n’t under his haycock fast asleep! Wake up, Boy Blue; come, blow your horn, or the cow ’ll be in the meadow, the sheep in the corn!”

Boy Blue, yawning sleepily, rubbing his eyes, and stretching, woke up, and, as little Gretchen Westman

was drawn upon the stage by her big brother, on a large white rocking-horse, Boy Blue, pointing at Gretchen, recited, —

“Ride a cock horse,
To Banbury Cross,
To see a young lady upon a white horse;
Rings on her fingers,
And bells on her toes,
She will have music wherever she goes.”

As she was drawn off the stage, Gretchen, who wore a pretty fancy costume, waved a staff covered with little bells, which she held in her ring-laden hands.

Gretchen's brother Carroll and her little sister Helena now came in, both crying, while Carroll slowly rang a large dinner-bell which he carried. At the same time their big brother Willis quietly stepped on the scene, and stood behind a cask in the rear of the stage, covered with green vines to represent a well.

Mother Goose. — “Dear me, here are some more of my children in trouble. I wonder what ails them all to-day? What is the matter, children?”

Carroll, slowly tolling his bell, —

“Ding, dong bell,—
Pussy's in the well;”

Helena : “Who put her in?”

Carroll : “Little Johnny Green.”

Helena : “Who pulled her out?”

Here, amid the laughter of the audience, Willis pulled up from the depths of the well a large calico

cat, and held her dangling by the string around her neck, as Carroll, pointing at him, said, —

“Big Johnny Stout.”

Helena, in a tone of deep feeling, said, —

“What a naughty boy was that
To drown poor pussy cat,
Who never did him any harm
But killed the mice in his father’s barn !”

Boy Blue (with a flourish of his horn.) — “Little Jack Horner.”

Stanley Taylor was Jack. Stanley was such a dear little fellow, with such a round, honest face and rosy cheeks, and such a big head of his own, full of wisdom beyond his years, that he was a great favorite with the whole Sunday-school, and the children in front began to laugh as soon as he appeared, while the children behind the scenes burst away from Ethel and Jennie, and crowded forward, determined to see Stanley act.

Mother Goose. — “I must bring out a pie at once, for Jacky loves pie. Here’s your pie, Jacky.”

A little chair had been placed in the front corner of the stage. Here Stanley seated himself, and received from Mother Goose a small saucer pie, on top of which were some large raisins. In his honest child’s voice he recited, —

“Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner,
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum,
And said, ‘What a good boy am I!’”

At rehearsals Stanley had been drilled, after putting in his thumb, to hold the plum up triumphantly to the admiring gaze of the audience, and so hold it until the end of the verse. But the plum was too great a temptation to Stanley; only a fleeting glimpse of it had the audience. It was clapped hastily in his mouth, and his last lines were muffled in plum. But Stanley had even more than the usual "loud applause," amid which he ran off the stage, and was soon curled up in his father's arms, watching the rest of the performance.

Boy Blue. — "Master Tommy Tucker."

Rob Clover appeared, dressed as a little Dutch boy, in wooden shoes, a blue frock, and a pointed cap with a tassel on its drooping end. Rob was one of the great features of the occasion.

Mother Goose. — "Tommy, *you* must sing for your supper."

"Oh, I don't want to sing," said Rob, most naturally. In truth, it had been with difficulty that his mother and Maude had induced him to take this part.

Mother Goose. — "You must. You know you can't have any supper unless you sing for it."

Rob then sang "Johnny Schmoker," acting out each instrument as he named it, amidst the liveliest delight of the spectators. When he finished, Mother Goose presented him with a half loaf of white bread and a pat of butter.

Tommy, gazing at the loaf dubiously, asked, —

"How can I cut it without any knife?"

Mother Goose. — "Just as easily as you can marry without any wife. Now run along, that's a good boy, and don't bother me with any more questions."

Rob walked off, gnawing at his loaf. Meantime, Boy Blue had gone to sleep.

Mother Goose. — “There’s that Boy Blue under the haycock fast asleep *again!* Really, Boy Blue, this will not answer at all. Here are more guests arriving, and you are not attending to your duty.”

Boy Blue, jumping hastily up, seized his horn, blew a blast, and announced, “Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sprat.”

Max Goldschmidt and his sister Frida came on dressed comically as an old man and woman, Max wearing a tall white hat, a red necktie, and a long coat, while Frida, in a long dress and a cap, had been made to look as fat as possible by stuffing out her gown.

Mother Goose (shaking hands). — “I am delighted to see you, Mrs. Sprat. How do you do, Mr. Sprat? I hope you will stay to supper; it is just ready. Draw the table out, Boy Blue.”

Boy Blue drew a small table, set for supper, to the front, and Mr. and Mrs. Sprat were seated, Mr. Sprat depositing his hat on the floor beside him, after drawing from it a huge red bandanna, and wiping his brow. Mr. Sprat offered his wife lean meat from the platter.

Mrs. Sprat shuddered. “You know very well, Mr. Sprat,” she said, “that I can’t endure *lean* meat.”

Mr. Sprat. — “Then I’ll keep it myself.”

Both ate greedily a few moments. Then Mrs. Sprat, extending a choice bit on her own fork, said, —

“Here’s a delicious morsel of fat. Won’t you try it, love?”

Mr. Sprat (angrily). — “How often, Mrs. Sprat, must I tell you that I can eat *no fat*?”

After eating very fast, each in turn seized the platter and scraped it hard. Then, with hasty good-byes, they departed, Mother Goose, who had watched them with evident displeasure, remarking to Boy Blue, —

“How like them to eat and run! Those Sprats never did have any manners.”

Now Boy Blue announced “Miss Muffet,” and in came little Eda Goldschmidt, daintily dressed in white.

Mother Goose. — “Miss Muffet, I am really afraid I haven’t any supper to offer you. Those greedy Sprats have actually ‘licked the platter clean.’ (Boy Blue whispers to her.) Oh, yes, there is a bowl of curds and whey. Sit right down on the tuffet, and you shall have it.”

Miss Muffet took the bowl, seated herself on a hassock in the centre of the stage, under the chandelier, and began eating with much relish, while Boy Blue recited, —

“Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet,
Eating curds and whey;
Along came a great spider
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.”

At the words “Along came a great spider,” a huge Japanese spider was slowly lowered from the chandelier right above Eda. Eda, who had a real genius for acting, and was not without training in the Hill-side Avenue Dramatic Club, spied this monster with

what seemed unfeigned terror, dropped her bowl, screamed, drew her dress up about her, jumped frantically this way and that, and then fled far around the spider.

When the laughter had subsided, Boy Blue remarked, "Here comes a crazy woman, I should think." One of the little Sunday-school children, quaintly dressed as an old woman, appeared bearing a broom aloft, with which she was so absorbed in sweeping the air above her head that she saw no one, thought of nothing else.

Mother Goose. — "No wonder she is crazy. She is the identical old woman who was tossed up in a blanket, seventy times as high as the moon."

Then, addressing her, —

"Old woman, old woman, quoth I,
Oh, whither, oh, whither, oh, whither so high?"

The old woman, still sweeping the air vigorously as she left the stage, called back, —

"To sweep the cobwebs from the sky,
And I will be back again by and by."

Mother Goose. — "Cracked, completely cracked! Broken down by too much house-cleaning! What a sad warning!"

Here entered a tiny boy, crying hard.

Mother Goose — "There seems to be no end to the trouble in my family. Now what is the matter with you?"

Little Boy (in a whining tone). — "I just met the black sheep, and I asked her as politely as I could, —

“Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?”

and she snapped out at me, —

“Yes, marry, have I,
Three bags full;
One for my master,
And one for my dame,
But none for the little boy
Who cries in the lane.”

The little boy went off crying aloud, “Boo, hoo, hoo!”

Mother Goose. — “I don’t see what he wants of wool. When boys act like that, it always reminds me of one of my own beautiful poems, —

“What are little boys made of, made of?
What are little boys made of?
Snaps and snails,
And puppy dogs’ tails;
And *that’s* what little boys are made of.

“What are little girls made of, made of?
What are little girls made of?
Sugar, and spice,
And everything nice,
And *that’s* what little girls are made of.”

Boy Blue. — “The Man from the South.”

Mother Goose. — “Dear me, he always expects bean porridge, and —

‘Routy tout tout,
The fire’s gone out!’”

“I’m so sorry, but you will have to take your porridge cold to-night,” handing the colored man a bowl.

Colored Man. — “Better cold than none at all.”
He eats rapidly.

Boy Blue. — “The Man in the Moon.”

This gentleman entered in haste, wearing a linen duster, and carrying a valise and umbrella, and asked hurriedly, —

“Can you tell me the way to Norwich?”

Mother Goose. — “Why, the fact is, you’ve come down too soon to inquire the way to Norwich. I declare, if that man from the South has n’t burnt his mouth eating *cold* plum-porridge! Who would have thought it possible?”

The Man from the Moon hurried off, consulting his watch, while the colored Man from the South departed in an agony of pain from his burned mouth.

Boy Blue (in a tone of awe). — “The Ghost of Solomon Grundy.”

Mother Goose held up her hands in horror, as Phil Kildare, a black-eyed, roguish boy, wrapped in a sheet, his face whitened with flour, stalked on, and in measured, solemn accents, recited, —

“Solomon Grundy,
Born on a Monday,
Christened on Tuesday,
Married on Wednesday,
Took ill on Thursday,
Worse on Friday,
Died on Saturday,
Buried on Sunday.
And this is the ghost
Of Solomon Grundy!”

As this interesting spectre faded away in the left wing, where he was greeted with audible giggles and

loud whispers of "Hello, Phil," Mother Goose sighed and wiped her eyes on her apron, saying, —

"How very sad! I really feel quite depressed. I wish something would happen to cheer me."

Boy Blue (briskly). — "The Bachelor and his Wife, on their wedding journey!"

Jamie Richardson came on trundling before him a tiny wheel-barrow in which was seated little Dorothy Shepard, in a quaint white bonnet, carrying a huge bandbox in her lap.

Mother Goose. — "Well, I am surprised. I did not even know that you were married. How did it come about?"

Jamie recited, —

"When I was a bachelor, I lived by myself,
And all the bread and cheese I had, I kept upon a shelf.
The rats and the mice did lead me such a life,
I was forced to go to London to buy me a wife.

"The streets were so broad, and the lanes so narrow,
I was forced to bring my wife home in a wheelbarrow.
The wheelbarrow broke, my wife got a fall,
Down tumbled wheelbarrow, little wife and all."

At the words, "the wheelbarrow broke," Jamie deftly tipped Dorothy out upon the floor, bandbox and all, and the curtain fell as she ran laughing off the stage.

Soon the curtain rose again on a grand tableau of all the characters, with Mother Goose in the centre, and Boy Blue announced, —

"Mother Goose in the bosom of her family!"

Mother Goose, bearing a whip in her hand, advanced to the front, saying, —

"There was an old woman who once lived in a shoe [that's I],
Who had so many children she did n't know what to do."
[*Waving her hands to right and left, You can see for yourselves !*]

"Some I'll give broth,
And some I'll give bread,
And some I'll whip soundly,
And put them to bed."

She flourished the whip, the children ran in all directions, and the curtain fell.

So ended the little performance, which had delighted every one, especially the performers. All the mothers were strongly of the opinion that it ought to be repeated soon in the evening for the benefit of the fathers.

Business was now resumed briskly at all the tables, and the stock of dolls, candy, lemonade, and peanuts was rapidly dwindling, when a sound of weeping was heard; little Stanley crying aloud, and not to be comforted.

"What is the matter? Is Stanley ill? Has he been hurt?" asked every one, anxiously clustering around where Stanley sat in his mother's lap, his face hid on her shoulder, crying as if his heart would break.

It seemed that Stanley's heart had been centred on his Jack Horner pie, and he had only waited impatiently for the fall of the curtain that he might eat that pie. And lo, it had proved a sham pie, a theatrical pie, made only of crust with no inside; a pie like some people, fair to look upon but hollow at heart. The disappointment had been more than Stanley could bear.

When the anxious inquirers learned the cause of Stanley's grief, they considerately went away and left

his mother to comfort him, and soon Stanley was running as gaily about again as if this dark cloud had not shut out all his sunshine only a moment ago.

When all the eatables and drinkables and nearly everything else had been sold, and when every child had spent his last penny, the fair closed, and the children found to their delight that they had cleared fifty dollars. This money was to be used to buy books for the Sunday-school library, and the express on the box to Nebraska was also to be paid from it.

The next Sunday the children were asked to bring to the church parlor the following Saturday whatever they wished to send in the Christmas box for the Nebraska children. The box must be sent at least two weeks before Christmas, to arrive in season.

Mrs. Strong and Rose Carman were to pack the box. Mrs. Strong had ordered from her grocer a wooden box which she feared would be too big. But when she and Rose reached the church Saturday afternoon, they gazed almost in dismay at all the bundles and packages the children had brought in, piled up on the floor, and covering chairs.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Strong, "after this, when we want anything done, we must certainly ask the children! What *are* we going to do with all these things? I believe we have two boxfuls."

"We'll try, anyway, and see how many we can get into this box before we send for another," said Rose.

The children had brought in many things that would brighten life not a little in the sod house far away in Nebraska. There were games and toys for all ages, and books without end. There was a big

new doll for little Carrie from Miss Carman's class, and also materials for a pretty plaid dress for her, from Miss Potter's class. Mrs. Carman had sent over a warm overcoat as good as new that Elliot had outgrown. When Amy heard about it, she said, —

“How nice that will be for Tommy or Jared to wear when they drive that thirty miles to town with their father!”

Mrs. Strong did not forget to put in a little package, marked, —

“For the grandpa who dances jigs for the children.” She also sent Carrie the little cotton batting doll that she had bought at the children's fair for the Fresh Air Fund in June, with a letter, telling her how Marie had made it when she was lying in bed, so weak and ill, to help raise money to send poor city children into the country, forgetting her own troubles in trying to help others.

Ben Bruce's mother sent, among other things, several pounds of dried peaches, saying, —

“I was once teaching in the far West during one of these years of terrible drought, and I remember what a luxury anything of the fruit sort was.”

Rose was a skilful packer, and as things always condense beyond belief in packing, everything was at last crowded into the box, except a few things which were saved out from the overflowing abundance of the children's gifts, for the Day Nursery children's Christmas.

Then came another despair.

“I don't believe we can ever nail this cover on,” said Mrs. Strong. “As fast as I get it down on one side, it springs up on the other.”

But here, luckily, Bryant Taylor dropped in to see how the box was getting along, and by means of his sitting on the cover, the box was finally fastened securely.

The Woman's Alliance sent at the same time two barrels of clothing to the Nebraska family. In due time, Amy was at once pleased and dismayed by receiving the following letter from her friend Jared, —

DEAR FRIEND,—The box and the barrels are all here. I drove with papa to town to get them. Mamma is sick, so I write in her place to thank you for all the things. I am glad you sent some things for grandpa. Carrie likes the cotton batting doll very much, and her big doll, and her dress, and all the things. So do we all. Carrie thinks Marie must be a very nice little girl. We have lots of fun evenings playing the games.

From your friend,

JARED JOHNS.

“Why, mamma,” said Amy, “he thanks me for all the things, as if I sent the barrels and everything. I am afraid people will think I took all the credit to myself.”

“Oh, no,” said her mother. “Jared’s heart was simply overflowing with pleasure, and he had to thank some one, so he wrote to thank you, because you were his little correspondent.”

Later came a letter from the mother, expressing more fully the children’s happiness in their gifts, and her own gratitude for the comforts that would do so much to tide her family over the long, cold winter.

“You do not know,” she wrote, “what a luxury the dried peaches were to us. It is long since we have

tasted any kind of fruit, and the peaches were greatly relished by us all."

All the letters were read to the Sunday-school, and the children felt fully repaid for any trouble they had taken to give so much pleasure to others.

The year was now drawing to its close, and Christmas came again, an especially joyful Christmas to Amy, because Gladys and Philip were able to come on from New York then, and also because she had her first Christmas tree. As she told Kitty, —

"I never could have a Christmas tree, because there was only one of me."

But this deprivation was more than made up to her this year by the biggest tree Mr. Green could find, which he erected in the dining-room, which Amy decorated gorgeously from top to bottom with her own hands, and into whose delights Gladys and Philip entered with a zeal second only to her own. To it she invited Kitty, Rob, Irene, Ronald, Jack, Dorothy, and Elliot Carman, and a few grown-up friends. It was the merriest of Merry Christmases, and when Mrs. Clover went away, she said, —

"We shall always remember your Christmas tree, Amy."

It was a source of great happiness that mamma had at last not only promised her the much desired dog, but had actually been into the city to what Amy called "the pet store," and engaged a water spaniel puppy who would be just the right age to set up in life on his own account, on her coming birthday. Philip had engaged the dear Billington Sea cottage again for the coming season, and had asked Amy to come and spend the whole summer there. The girls'

musical club proposed to give their grand musicale for the benefit of the Associated Charities early in February. Life was all bright and full of joyous plans and hopes before the little girl.

And so, loving and beloved, Amy entered on her Happy New Year.

THE END.

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"Jolly Good Times To-Day," by Mary P. Wells Smith, is a very pretty and natural story of child-life. The author evidently understands children, and sympathizes with them in their joys and griefs. She knows, too, how to entertain them in a bright, sensible way. — *Christian Intelligencer*.

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The story is charming, and charmingly told. — *Boston Advertiser*

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A capital children's story is "Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack." It is full of spirit and fun, graphic in description, sensible and improving without any formality, and in a word, just what young people enjoy, and what wise parents give them to enjoy. — *Congregationalist*, Boston

"Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack" is a child's story of western Massachusetts, and it excellently reproduces those now distant days when cattle were driven to Boston market from half the hill towns of New England, when the minister's and the lawyer's boys went barefoot like the farmers', and when country life in New England seemed a great deal nearer the soul of things than it has been of late. Mrs. Smith, who writes from near Cincinnati, has an agreeable and simple style, and can be read with pleasure by many who are older than the children she describes so closely. — *Republican*, Springfield, Mass.

A charming picture of the old stage-coach days, and the life in the staid country minister's family. The boys and girls who read this interesting book will get a good idea of the simple life when their fathers and mothers were young. — *Christian Register*, Boston.

More Good Times at Hackmatack. Illustrated. 16mo. Cloth. Price, \$1.25.

A thoroughly charming and enjoyable book. Spring cleaning, soap-making, Fast Day, sugaring in the woods, making hay, and other rural sports and labors are told of with the most delicious freshness and vividness. To children of a larger growth this book will be a perpetual reminder of their own far-off youth and childhood. — *Noah Brooks*, in the *Book-Buyer*.

The story is as clean and wholesome as the air which it breathes. The book is full of fun and go; and the boys who are prevented by circumstances over which they have no control from having good times at Hackmatack at first hand, can enjoy them without difficulty or fatigue in any other part of the world, thanks to Mrs. Mary P. Wells Smith. — *Chicago Tribune*.

It is a lifelike story of New England country life in the early part of this century, and is full of interest of more than one kind. It is photographic in the fidelity of its pictures, and is written with vivacity and good judgment. — *Congregationalist*, Boston.

Readers of "Jolly Good Times at Hackmatack" will be delighted to continue the story of childhood life long ago in that delightful hill town of western Massachusetts. Whatever may be said of New England life by those who know it only as depicted by Mrs. Stowe, Rose Terry Cooke, Miss Jewett, Miss Wilkins, and others, — that it was and is narrow, hard, sordid, gloomy, — it would be hard to convince any one who has had a New England country childhood that childhood anywhere else in the world could be so wholly delectable. Mrs. Smith writes with that conviction, and her story is not a bit too optimistic for youthful readers, or older ones of New England rearing. — *Providence Journal*.

The series of bright, breezy stories in the present volume will awaken many a hearty laugh and bring a sunny hour into many a sombre day. Mrs. Smith's stories are not only cheery and pleasing, but are so simple, pure, and truthful as to be a helpful and stimulating influence to those young people who read them. — *Cincinnati Herald and Presbyterian*.

The latest of the Hackmatack books brings to a close these delightful annals of farm life fifty years ago which have taken high rank as bits of real literature. . . . Few books so bridge the gulf of years, or bring back so vividly the old ways and means as do these simple sketches of New England life. Their charm lies in their atmosphere of hearty good-nature, in their fresh and exuberant style, and in their entire truthfulness. There is no effort to instruct, or to inculcate a moral, yet the teaching is undeniably there. Mrs. Smith is entirely at home in these reminiscences of happy childhood, and in what she writes there is an exhilarating flavor of country living quite individual.

Their Canoe Trip. Illustrated. 16mo. Cloth. Price, \$1.25.

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Mrs. Mary P. W. Smith has made a delightful book out of this canoe trip, taken by two Boston boys on six New England rivers, which lead them from Francestown, N. H., down to their home. . . . So bright a book as this ought to show bright boys that it is not necessary to become a cowboy in order to have a taste of wild life out of doors, but that travels near home can be quite lively enough. — *Bulletin, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

If all books written expressly for the young were like "Their Canoe Trip," the reviewer would have small need of any vocabulary but that of praise — *Boston Advertiser*.

"Their Canoe Trip," purports to be written by a woman. Almost we do not believe it. How can a woman enter so completely into the boys' substance and come out again, bringing with her the very essence of boyishness, its love of adventure, of hairbreadth 'scapes, of pretty girls, and good grub? A prominent librarian has said that the greatest readers of boys' books of adventure were girls. Such books as this go far to persuade one that the best writers of such books are girls grown up. A very few days and only a little over one hundred miles of canoeing furnish the material for this pretty volume. From Francestown, N. H., to Roxbury, through the Piscataquog, the Merrimac, the Concord, the Asabet, the Charles and Neponset Rivers, two manly and merry boys work the Black-Eyed Susan. They make from three to six miles a day, and not a mile but is set thick with happenings and doings to rivet the reader's interest. There are repeated escapes from a watery grave and from threatened starvation, from riverside ruffians and factory thieves, from belligerent cows and killing maidenly eyes. . . . Boys and girls alike will pronounce this a "jolly book," in spite of the wet skins and aching bones and mortifying delapidation of its heroes. — *Tribune, Cambridge, Mass.*

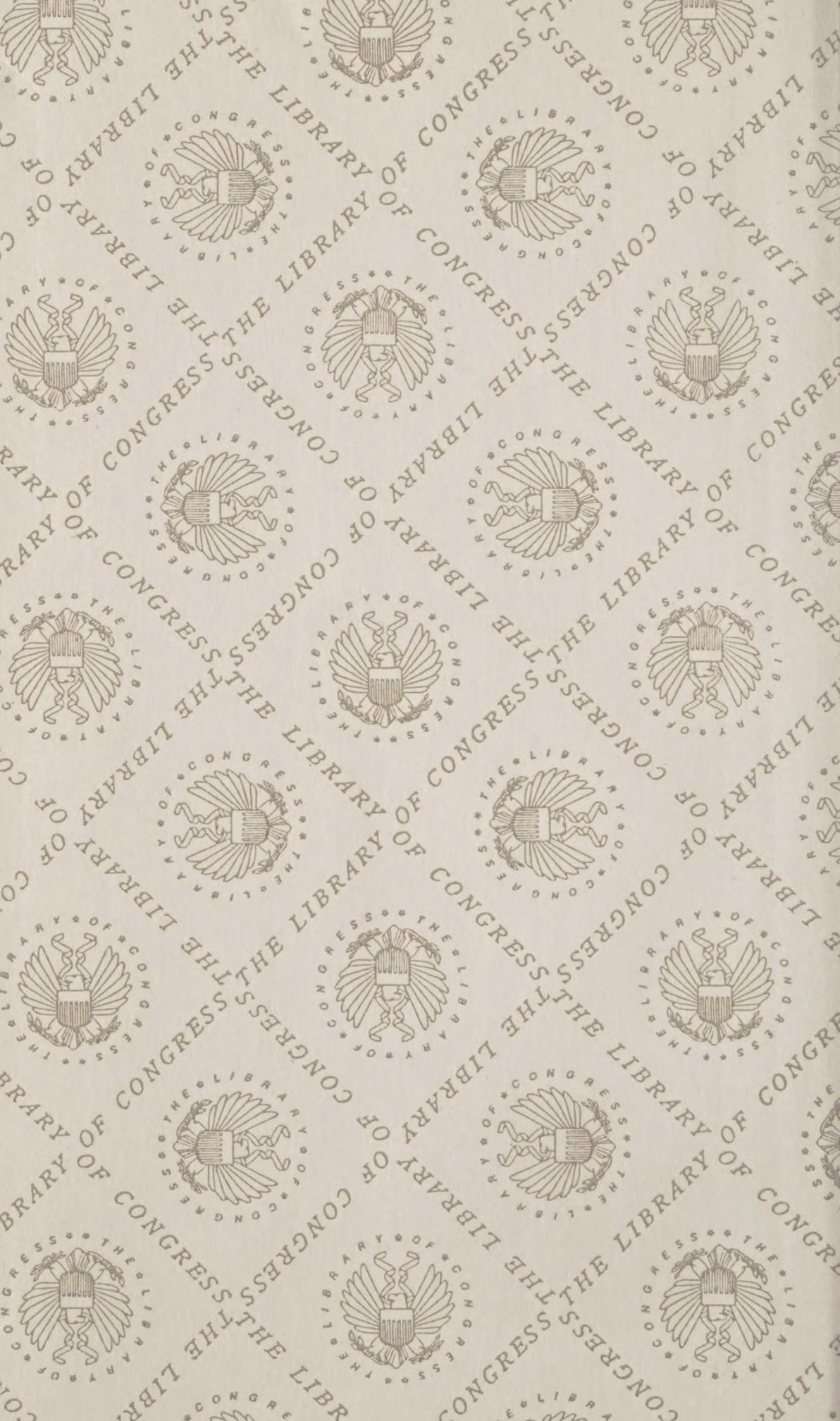
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No better book for a bright, healthy boy's reading has been published this year. — *Boston Transcript*.

An uncommonly lively and agreeable story. — *New York Tribune*.

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